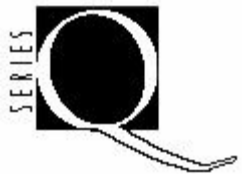
An Archive of Feelings

TRAUMA, SEXUALITY, AND LESBIAN PUBLIC CULTURES

ANN CVETKOVICH



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And then there's Gretchen Phillips, who for over ten years now has loved me passionately and extravagantly. In her perpetual insistence that I follow my heart's desire, she has helped me remember that writing can be a labor of love, and she has given me a constant supply of reasons to love her back.

KEEP ON LIVIN'

You hide inside, so not okay (keep on, keep on livin') What if you remember more today? (keep on, keep on livin') The phone rings but there's too much to say (keep on, keep on livin') You tell them to go when you wish they would stay (keep on, keep on livin') You gotta keep on (keep on livin!)..... Disproportionate reactions just won't fade (keep on, keep on livin') Every dude you see puts you in a rage (keep on, keep on livin') Or stupid shit keeps making you cry (keep on, keep on livin') Your friends are worried you won't tell them why (keep on, keep on livin') You gotta keep on (keep on livin!)..... Look up to the sky sky sky. Take back your own tonight. You'll find more than you see. It's time now now get ready. So you can taste that sweet sweet cake and feel the warm water in a lake (y'know). What about that nice cool breeze? And hear the buzzing of the bumble bees. Just live beyond those neighborhood lives and go past that yard outside and push through their greatest fears and live past your memories tears cuz you don't need to scratch inside. Just please hold onto your pride and... so don't let them bring you down and don't let them fuck you around cuz those are your arms, that is your heart and no no they can't tear you apart. They can't take it away, no! This is your time this is your life and..... (keep on livin!).....

Liner notes from Le Tigre's Feminist Sweepstakes (2001) with the words to "Keep on Livin'." Courtesy of Le Tigre.

Introduction

When I first heard Le Tigre perform "Keep on Livin' " at the 2001 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, it was as though the writing of this book had come full circle, since one of its starting points was a performance by Tribe 8 on the same stage in 1994. In connecting the experience of living with a history of sexual abuse to the difficulties of coming out, songwriters Kathleen Hanna and JD Samson credit as one of their influences the article I wrote about Tribe 8's 1994 performance, an article that formed the nucleus of this book, and they dedicated their Michigan performance of the song to Tribe 8's Lynn Breedlove. Even without those associations, I would have fallen in love with the song because it captures the way that survival is as simple and as elusive as being able to "taste that sweet sweet cake." I hear the insistent refrain of "you gotta keep on (keep on livin!)" as part curse and part celebration; Hanna's cry of "you gotta keep on" sounds like an impossible demand for survival, but when the chorus answers with "keep on, keep on livin'," it sounds like the cheer that can help sustain you. Performed live, the song creates an opportunity for the audience to shout out the words as a group and affirm the many kinds of survival that bring them together. The music helps return the listener to the pleasures of sensory embodiment that trauma destroys: "Cuz those are your arms, that is your heart and no no they can't tear you apart." Unapologetically feminist and queer, Le Tigre supplements their songs with videos and slides projected on a screen behind them to create a multimedia forum for the polemical messages inspired by their political commitments. The combined power of song, visuals, and live performance lends itself to the formation of a public culture around trauma that doesn't involve medical diagnoses or victims.

Performances by bands like Le Tigre and Tribe 8 have been my inspiration here and form the archive in which my own feelings are deposited. Sometimes the most effective way I can explain my project is to point to work like theirs because it articulates better than I can what I want to say. If I were to "follow the trail of breadcrumbs in my head" (to quote Kathleen Hanna) and try to tell the story of how I came to write this book, I would probably start not with trauma but with depression.[1] Or to use less clinical terms, feeling bad. When I was in my late twenties, I started coming up against the life challenges that sent me to a therapist to explore why I was feeling bad. A major relationship break-up. A shifting sexual identity. A dissertation to finish. These were all equally important problems, since—as is so often the case for academics—my personal life was deeply entangled with my intellectual life. In the process of exploring how my early history might be contributing to my current distress, many therapists suggested that my history of incest was probably at the root of my adult struggles. I was fascinated with this idea since it offered a convenient explanation for why I was depressed (and probably would be for a long time), but I was also skeptical about this magic-bullet

theory of sexual trauma.

One reason for my skepticism is that the feminist recommendation to tell my story, whether in therapy or more publicly, did not provide emotional relief or personal transformation. My aesthetic sensibility rebelled against this path; I was afraid my story would resemble a clichéd case history from a self-help book. My intellectual training also threw some roadblocks in the way; I was too steeped in Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis to believe that telling the story was going to make a difference—unless the circumstances were very particular. And even if I managed to circumvent these censors, the story itself couldn't be articulated in a single coherent narrative—it was much more complicated than the events of what happened, connected to other histories that were not my own. I've often been moved by listening to others go public with their experiences, but I didn't know how to tell my own story.

In the wake of this impasse, the trail of breadcrumbs led me to the category of trauma. Intellectual life has been one of my survival strategies, and I frequently find solace in theoretical concepts and debates that situate my own experience in a larger context. Despite the risks involved in taking on a discourse that has been dominated by medical and pathologizing approaches, I have been drawn to the category of trauma because it opens up space for accounts of pain as psychic, not just physical. As a name for experiences of socially situated political violence, trauma forges overt connections between politics and emotion. Sexual acts, butch-femme discourse, queer transnational publics, incest, AIDS and AIDS activism, grassroots archives—these are some of the sites of lesbian public culture where I have not only found the traces of trauma but ways of thinking about trauma that do not pathologize it, that seize control over it from the medical experts, and that forge creative responses to it that far outstrip even the most utopian of therapeutic and political solutions. I write about these lesbian locations rather than more obvious sites of geopolitical catastrophe classified under the rubric of trauma: war, genocide, the Holocaust. The feelings and events that draw my attention don't necessarily command the national and transnational publicity that such traumas generate. In fact, the kinds of affective experiences that I explore here are lost in discourses of trauma that focus only on the most catastrophic and widely public events. I'm interested not just in trauma survivors but in those whose experiences circulate in the vicinity of trauma and are marked by it. I want to place moments of extreme trauma alongside moments of everyday emotional distress that are often the only sign that trauma's effects are still being felt.

Trauma discourse has allowed me to ask about the connection between girls like me feeling bad and world historical events. To do so, though, has necessitated grappling with an apparent gender divide within trauma discourse that allows sexual trauma to slip out of the picture. Sometimes the impact of sexual trauma doesn't seem to measure up to that of collectively experienced historical events, such as war and genocide. Sometimes it seems invisible because it is confined to the domestic or private sphere. Sometimes it doesn't appear sufficiently catastrophic because it doesn't produce dead bodies or even, necessarily, damaged ones. Although one feminist response has been to argue for the inclusion and equation of sexual trauma with other forms, my hunch has been that its persistent invisibility actually demands a quite different approach, one that can recognize trauma's specificities and variations. Thus, my argument is not necessarily for the inclusion of lesbian sites of trauma within trauma studies or the national public sphere; I am instead interested in how these lesbian sites give rise to different ways of thinking about trauma and in particular to a sense of trauma as connected to the textures of everyday experience. Moreover, in focusing on cultural responses to trauma, I resist the authority given to medical discourses and especially the diagnosis of traumatic experience as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Although I was interested in feminist approaches to trauma, the solemnity of so much feminist work on incest did not speak to me. I wanted something more than self-righteous anger or hushed tones of sympathy or respectful silence. I found what I was looking for in lesbian subcultures that cut through narratives of innocent victims and therapeutic healing to present something that was raw, confrontational, and even sexy. Much of this lesbian writing about sexuality is working class in origins and has ties to a butch-femme culture that preceded the 1970s women's movement. Making prominent interventions in the 1980s sex wars, it has a combative relation to feminist efforts to prescribe a correct sexuality. When Amber Hollibaugh talks about "dangerous desires," or Joan Nestle describes the power of vulnerability, or Leslie Feinberg and Cherríe Moraga write about not wanting to be touched, they celebrate the hard-won experience of sexual pleasure without denying its roots in pain and difficulty.[2] Dykes writing about sexuality and vulnerability have forged an emotional knowledge out of the need to situate intimate lives in relation to classism, racism, and other forms of oppression. Although the backgrounds of these writers were very different from mine, they moved me in a way that no one else had, and I wanted their work to be part of my discussion of trauma and sexuality. Their writings have also been points of reference when theoretical concepts fail me. In Dorothy Allison's bold words, "Two or three things I know, but this is one I am not supposed to talk about, how it comes together—sex and violence, love and hatred. I'm not ever supposed to put together the two halves of my life—the man who walked across my childhood and the life I have made for my self. I am not supposed to talk about hating that man when I grew up to be a lesbian, a dyke, stubborn, competitive, and perversely lustful."[3] Allison is breaking the silence, but she's doing so in a way that is fiercely uncompromising, that doesn't edit out anger, or lesbianism, or complex sexual lives. Moreover, Allison's work circulates within lesbian public cultures that create a collective audience for trauma rather than consigning its representation to therapeutic contexts. These public cultures have taken sexuality out of the bedroom and the intimacy of the couple and made it the focus of collective conversations about S/M, butch-femme, dildos, and more. These public cultures provide a vehicle for discussions of sexual trauma as well.

My thinking about queer trauma has also been indelibly affected by the AIDS crisis, which is another crucial foundation for this project. Whereas my own distress both past and present seemed suspect—too girly, too middle-class, too intellectual—watching my friends die was a much more tangible and legitimate form of suffering. It was okay to feel bad about that. My involvement with AIDS activism also provided a public forum within which to express outrage and sadness and to understand these very personal losses as part of a broader landscape of social problems. But if AIDS gave me a touchstone for sanctioned grief and anger, it also taught me that such legitimacy was not always universally acknowledged. The AIDS crisis offered clear evidence that some deaths were more important than others and that homophobia and, significantly, racism could affect how trauma was publicly recognized. I was not, for example, willing to accept a desexualized or sanitized version of queer culture as the price of inclusion within the national public sphere; I wanted the sexual cultures that AIDS threatened to be acknowledged as both an achievement and a potential loss.

The formation of a public culture around trauma has been especially visible in the queer response to the AIDS crisis. Queer activism insisted on militancy over mourning, but also remade mourning in the form of new kinds of public funerals and queer intimacies. Like the dyke sexual cultures I write about, the AIDS culture that compels me embraces camp, shame, and the perverse and resists therapeutic models of sickness and health. Another touchstone for me has been David Wojnarowicz's shameless representations of cruising and his vision of carrying a dead body to the White House as an expression of public mourning:

Each public disclosure of a private reality becomes something of a magnet that can attract others with a similar frame of reference . . . I imagine what it would be like if friends had a demonstration each time a lover or friend or a stranger died of AIDS. I imagine what it would be like if, each time a lover, friend or stranger died of this disease, their friends, lovers, or neighbors would take the dead body and drive with it in a car a hundred miles an hour to washington d.c. and blast through the gates of the white house and come to a screeching halt before the entrance and dump their lifeless form on the front steps. It would be comforting to see those friends, neighbors, lovers, and strangers mark time and place and history in such a public way.[4]

As the years passed, I found that the deaths of my friends stayed with me, and my own experience of AIDS activism made me want to document it before it was lost or misrepresented. As a way of continuing to combine activism and mourning, I turned to the task of preserving the archive of AIDS activism by conducting oral histories with lesbian AIDS activists included here. My desire, forged from the urgency of death, has been to keep the history of AIDS activism alive and part of the present.

In addition to incest and AIDS, a third inspiration has been the history of race in the United States, a history that is inescapably marked by trauma. As a Canadian who is a longtime resident (alien) in the United States, I have been struck by the everyday effects of a racial history that is different from the one I grew up in, and this geopolitical landscape has been more of a point of reference for me than the Holocaust, which although it has been a major influence on this project, was not its starting point. Genocide, slavery, and the many other traumas of "American" history (broadly conceived as a transnational one that exceeds the borders of the United States) are part of its founding and yet have too often been ignored and forgotten, especially as trauma. I would like to see encounters with the traumatic past forge a path between a debilitating descent into pain and the denial of it. The challenge is that these national traumas are buried more deeply in the past than the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and other geopolitical sites of trauma where there are living survivors, and thus they require different theoretical and memorial strategies. At the same time, they continue to haunt the present, and they take surprising forms, appearing in textures of everyday emotional life that don't necessarily seem traumatic and certainly don't fit the model of PTSD. Whether the language of trauma is used or not, the project of investigating racial histories needs to be part of an interdisciplinary trauma studies. Everyday forms of racism, many of which are institutional or casual and thus don't always appear visible except to those who are attuned to them, are among the effects of longer histories of racial trauma. This insight has been a crucial resource for me in tracking the diffuse effects of sexual trauma and the connections between catastrophic events and very ordinary ones. I find that the demands of thinking about race in relation to trauma converge with those of thinking about sexuality because both require a method that is alert to the idiosyncrasies of emotional life. Both projects benefit from the queer strategies that have made it possible to collect the strange archive of feelings assembled here.

Archives of Trauma

This book's structure and materials are diffuse. It approaches national trauma histories and their cultural memory from the unabashedly minoritarian perspective of lesbian cultures. Its sites of investigation—lesbian sexuality, migration and diaspora, and AIDS activism, among others —are intended not to constitute an exhaustive survey but to represent examples of how affective experience can provide the basis for new cultures. It is organized as "an archive of feelings," an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception. Its focus on trauma serves as a point of entry into a vast archive of feelings, the many forms of love, rage,

intimacy, grief, shame, and more that are part of the vibrancy of queer cultures.

My hope of making the book's marginal, idiosyncratic, and sometimes unexpected sites relevant to more general understandings of sexual and national trauma is grounded in the conviction that trauma challenges common understandings of what constitutes an archive.[5] Because trauma can be unspeakable and unrepresentable and because it is marked by forgetting and dissociation, it often seems to leave behind no records at all. Trauma puts pressure on conventional forms of documentation, representation, and commemoration, giving rise to new genres of expression, such as testimony, and new forms of monuments, rituals, and performances that can call into being collective witnesses and publics. It thus demands an unusual archive, whose materials, in pointing to trauma's ephemerality, are themselves frequently ephemeral. Trauma's archive incorporates personal memories, which can be recorded in oral and video testimonies, memoirs, letters, and journals. The memory of trauma is embedded not just in narrative but in material artifacts, which can range from photographs to objects whose relation to trauma might seem arbitrary but for the fact that they are invested with emotional, and even sentimental, value.

In its unorthodox archives, trauma resembles gay and lesbian cultures, which have had to struggle to preserve their histories. In the face of institutional neglect, along with erased and invisible histories, gay and lesbian archives have been formed through grassroots efforts, just as cultural and political movements have demanded attention to other suppressed and traumatic histories, ranging from the Holocaust, to labor and civil rights activism, to slavery and genocide. Forged around sexuality and intimacy, and hence forms of privacy and invisibility that are both chosen and enforced, gay and lesbian cultures often leave ephemeral and unusual traces. In the absence of institutionalized documentation or in opposition to official histories, memory becomes a valuable historical resource, and ephemeral and personal collections of objects stand alongside the documents of the dominant culture in order to offer alternative modes of knowledge. The intersections of trauma archives and gay and lesbian archives will be explored more fully in a later chapter, but the problem of the archive also frames the book's more general discussion of trauma and its mode of inquiry.

For example, the individual chapters of this book should be understood as working as much to produce an archive as to analyze one. The genres used to advance this book's arguments cover a wide range; they include novels, poems, essays, memoirs, video and film, photography, performance, and interviews. The eclecticism of my materials also stems from the fact that both lesbian and trauma cultures frequently produce minor or experimental genres. Many of these materials are the product of alternative presses, performance venues, film festivals, and other cultural spaces and networks that nurture a fragile yet distinctive independent media. Moreover, even the texts that belong to more traditional and tangible genres, such as the novel or feature-length film, participate in public cultures that include more experimental and ephemeral materials, and they can't be understood independently of them. Anthologies with a mixture of voices and genres render visible counterpublics that haven't produced major novels or films. Performance art persists around the edges of the theatrical world, adapting to small spaces and making the most of the power of a single performer. It is no accident that two of my examples in the next chapter, *2.5 Minute Ride and Milk of Amnesia*, are performance pieces and that both emerge from the crucible of New York's Lower East Side, where performance cultures and queer publics are mutually constituting. Performance is emblematic of the public cultures that intrigue me; with few resources—low budgets and makeshift spaces—it insinuates itself as an alternative to the television news shows, big-budget movies, and *New York Times* best-seller lists that are part of a culture industry increasingly owned by a small number of transnational conglomerates. Queer performance creates publics by bringing together live bodies in space, and the theatrical

experience is not just about what's on stage but also about who's in the audience creating community.[6] I am determined not to underestimate the power of such genres and publics. They act as a guard against fears about the displacement of political life by affective life and the conversion of political culture into a trauma culture.

My approach to genre has been inclusive because the resulting range of texts and artifacts enables attention to how publics are formed in and through cultural archives. Cultural artifacts become the archive of something more ephemeral: culture as a "way of life," to borrow from Raymond Williams, or a counterpublic, to invoke recent work on the public sphere.[7] My materials emerge out of cultural spaces—including activist groups, women's music festivals, sex toy stores, and performance events—that are built around sex, feelings, and trauma. These publics are hard to archive because they are lived experiences, and the cultural traces that they leave are frequently inadequate to the task of documentation. Even finding names for this other meaning of culture as a "way of life"— subcultures, publics, counterpublics—is difficult. Their lack of a conventional archive so often makes them seem not to exist, and this book tries to redress that problem by ranging across a wide variety of genres and materials in order to make not just texts but whole cultures visible. In using the term *public culture*, I keep as open as possible the definition of what constitutes a public in order to remain alert to forms of affective life that have not solidified into institutions, organizations, or identities. Like Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, I would like to "support forms of affective, erotic, and personal living that are public in the sense of accessible, available to memory, and sustained through collective activity" because "queer is difficult to entextualize as culture."[8]

My investigation of "trauma cultures"—public cultures that form in and around trauma—means that ultimately this book is not only focused on texts as representations or narratives of trauma but also concerned with how cultural production that emerges around trauma enables new practices and publics. My claim that trauma raises questions about what counts as an archive is thus connected to a further claim that trauma also raises questions about what counts as a public culture. My goal is to suggest how affect, including the affects associated with trauma, serves as the foundation for the formation of public cultures. This argument entails a reconsideration of conventional distinctions between political and emotional life as well as between political and therapeutic cultures. This book implicitly juxtaposes cultural production and therapy, not in order to dismiss the latter but in order to expand the category of the therapeutic beyond the confines of the narrowly medicalized or privatized encounter between clinical professional and client. By foregrounding cultural approaches to trauma, however, I do seek to counter the assumption that clinical approaches are the only model for responding to trauma. Trauma cultures are actually doing the work of therapy; rather than a model in which privatized affective responses displace collective or political ones, my book proposes a collapsing of these distinctions so that affective life can be seen to pervade public life.[9]

Most of the materials explored in this book are contemporary—a choice driven by the conviction that the study of the present transforms historical methods and is of equal importance to the work of historicizing sexuality as is the study of premodern periods. The chapters on activism and the history of ACT UP/NY, for example, reveal how perilously close to being lost even the recent past is, especially when it includes not only traumatic experience but gay and lesbian and activist histories, which are constantly being erased by resistance and neglect. Using a range of methods, including an experiment in the genre of the oral history interview and its connections to testimony, this chapter engages with the difficulty of gathering even a history of the present and the challenge, even for experimental ethnography, of documenting emotional life. It is my hope that making the history of the

present more strange will produce a new sense of how to approach the history of the past.

This book lies between the queer and the lesbian, not quite occupying either category comfortably. Its cultural cases and sites can be described as queer, although using that term alone does not account for the ways in which many of them are specifically marked as lesbian. Yet naming as my focus lesbian culture does not quite do justice to what are frequently the queer ways in which they occupy that category. In many cases, my materials operate in a critical relation to monolithic or homogeneous understandings of lesbian culture, opening space for sex radicalism, specificities of class and region, or racial differences. For example, the writings of Dorothy Allison, Amber Hollibaugh, and Leslie Feinberg emerge from butch-femme discourses that have been a vehicle for articulating not just sexual differences within lesbian culture but class differences. And the racial and national specificities of work by South Asians such as Shani Mootoo and Pratibha Parmar or Latinas such as Carmelita Tropicana, Cherríe Moraga, and Frances Negrón-Muntaner are underdescribed by the category lesbian. The category lesbian remains only one index of the many cultures and publics within which my examples operate, but it is no less significant for being only a partial description. Thus, rather than presuming a singular understanding of lesbian identity or public culture, this project accounts for a range of public cultures that emerge in relation to trauma. In some cases, these cultures may be exclusively lesbian, and in other cases, lesbian culture may be part of a more diverse public organized around sexuality or ethnicity. This book uses both the queer and the lesbian in order to resist any presumption that they are mutually exclusive—that the queer, for instance, is the undoing of the identity politics signified by the category lesbian, or that lesbian culture is hostile to queer formations. Because the focus is on publics rather than identities, the category lesbian occupies a range of meanings and can be more and less foregrounded within individual cases.

In tracking an archive of trauma, I hope also to forge methodologies for the documentation and examination of the structures of affect that constitute cultural experience and serve as the foundation for public cultures. It is important to incorporate affective life into our conceptions of citizenship and to recognize that these affective forms of citizenship may fall outside the institutional practices that we customarily associate with the concept of a citizen. My investigation of the affective life of lesbian cultures is motivated in particular by my dissatisfaction with responses to homophobia that take the form of demands for equal rights, gay marriage, domestic partnership, and even hate crimes legislation; such political agendas assume a gay citizen whose affective fulfillment resides in assimilation, inclusion, and normalcy. Within the trauma archive that interests me are the affective lives that counter the clichéd narratives of domestic contentment as well as anxiety, depression, and despair as the paradigmatic American national affects, and the structures of feeling that can bring into being alternative cultures.

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In chapter 1, I survey the theoretical influences that guide the book's approach to trauma. While acknowledging the powerful theories of trauma that have emerged within clinical psychology and poststructuralist theory, I also turn to feminist theory, critical race theory, Marxist cultural theory, and queer theory as resources for a demedicalized and depathologized model of trauma. Discussions of two performance pieces, Lisa Kron's *2.5 Minute Ride* and Carmelita Tropicana's *Milk of Amnesia*, also reveal how catastrophic traumatic histories are embedded within everyday life experience. Trauma becomes the hinge between systemic structures of exploitation and oppression and the felt experience of them.

Chapter 2 argues that lesbian sex cultures can add to trauma theory by juxtaposing butch-femme discourses about sex with a classic text of trauma theory, Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure*

Principle. Like Freud's analysis, butch-femme writings create links between trauma and bodily penetration. Femme discourses about getting fucked reframe the relation between trauma and touch, at once acknowledging the traumatic power of touch and embracing it. Butch discourses about emotional vulnerability connect the trauma of physical touch to the traumatizing potential of being emotionally touched. These writings about lesbian sexuality offer new ways of understanding trauma's double status as both physical and psychic, exterior and interior—a paradox that has preoccupied not only Freud but contemporary theorists of trauma including Jean Laplanche, Mark Seltzer, Leo Bersani, and Ruth Leys. In addition to having been crucial to the formation of sexual public cultures, both in the pre-Stonewall decades and in their reappropriation over the last decade, butch-femme discourses provide a vital archive of not only sexual intimacy but trauma theory.

Chapter 3 continues the book's discussion of sexual trauma by exploring lesbian public cultures that have formed around incest. Using Margaret Randall's memoir *This Is about Incest* and Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina* and *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, along with performances by punk band Tribe 8 and self-help books, the chapter examines lesbian and queer representations of incest that respond to trauma by acknowledging the messy and dangerous dimensions of sexuality as well as embracing shame, aggression, and perversity. The stories and performances it scrutinizes refuse to present the incest survivor as innocent victim and use the public cultures forged around lesbian sexuality as a resource for irreverent, angry, and humorous responses to trauma.

Both chapters 2 and 3 insist that sexual trauma also has persistently national dimensions, whether in the case of Allison using an incest story to incorporate southern white trash culture into U.S. history or Moraga writing about being sexually touched as freighted with histories of racism and colonialism. Chapter 4 addresses trauma as a national category even more explicitly by asking what queer transnational publics reveal about the traumatic histories of migration and diaspora that haunt the construction of the nation. Focusing in particular on queer Puerto Rican diaspora as represented in Negrón-Muntaner's video *Brincando el charco* as well as queer South Asian diaspora as represented in Parmar's video *Khush* and Mootoo's novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*, the chapter considers how queer transnational formations produce creative responses to trauma. The chapter seeks to incorporate the affective life of queer diaspora cultures into the transnational archive of migration as trauma history.

Chapters 5 and 6 take on AIDS, which has been acknowledged as a national and global trauma, but only through forms of cultural struggle that have had to address its close ties to homosexuality and forms of sexuality constructed as deviant or perverse. I focus on activism, but more specifically on lesbian AIDS activists whose role in the AIDS crisis has not always been fully acknowledged. The chapters engage critiques of therapeutic culture as a response to trauma by exploring the affective dimensions of activist cultures in a way that problematizes distinctions between therapy and politics, or between mourning and militancy.[10] Through an ethnography of lesbian AIDS activists, I seek to uncover the emotional histories that lead people to activism and to document the legacy of this activism in the present. Yet this ethnography remains experimental, confronting the limitations of the interview as a way of creating an emotional archive. Chapter 5 explores the challenges of documenting the intimacies of personal relationships and political controversies within ACT UP. Chapter 6 focuses on mourning, juxtaposing the interviews with memoirs by lesbians who have been involved in caretaking. The memoirs show how those on the supposed periphery of the AIDS crisis, who occupy what is so often a feminized role, turn the care of the body and encounters with death into a queer experience. The chapter also considers the ongoing legacy of AIDS activism and how its history continues to pervade the lives of activists.

Chapter 7 looks at the intersections between archives of trauma and archives of gay and lesbian history. Through discussion of grassroots, community-based archives such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn and San Francisco's Gay and Lesbian Historical Society, and their more recently developed and more institutionalized counterparts in San Francisco's and New York's Public Libraries, the unorthodox nature of the gay and lesbian archive is used as a way of shedding light on the challenge of creating trauma archives. The chapter also examines how documentary video, in its passionate quest for histories that can provide the foundation for culture in the present, incorporates and transforms archival materials. It explores *Not Just Passing Through*, a documentary video *about* archives and Jean Carlomusto's simultaneously personal and public work in *To Catch a Glimpse* and *Shatzi Is Dying*, which address mortality by remembering her grandmother and her dog, respectively. The particular ways in which new documentaries create affective archives are instructive for the ongoing project of creating testimonials, memorial spaces, and rituals that can acknowledge traumatic pasts as a way of constructing new visions for the future. These queer lesbian archives and documentaries deserve a place alongside Holocaust and war memorials because they make room for the intimate histories demanded by emotion and sexuality.

The book concludes with a brief epilogue that considers how the many representations of the murder of Brandon Teena, including the films *The Brandon Teena Story* and *Boys Don't Cry*, constitute a case of queer trauma in the national public sphere. The epilogue also discusses responses to this book while it has been in progress in order to further consider the value of both lesbian feelings and trauma as the foundation for public cultures.

1 The Everyday Life of Queer Trauma

Sometimes people say we're living in a trauma culture—that it's a time of crisis, and that the crisis is manifest in people's feelings, whether numbness or anxiety, lack of feeling or too much feeling.[1] And sometimes they say that calling it a trauma culture is a symptom rather than a diagnosis, a quick-fix naming of the zeitgeist that misrecognizes a structural condition as a feeling. A significant body of work within American studies has recently mounted a critique of U.S. culture by describing it as a trauma culture. Wendy Brown speaks about identity politics as a politics of ressentiment in which claims on the state are made by individuals and groups who constitute themselves as injured victims whose grievances demand redress.[2] Mark Seltzer writes about a wound culture, describing the cultural obsession with serial killings and other sites of violence that produces a "pathological public sphere."[3] Lauren Berlant develops the notion of an "intimate public sphere," the result of a process whereby "a citizen is defined as a person traumatized by some aspect of life in the United States."[4] In these analyses, U.S. culture's transformation into a trauma culture is a problem, representing the failure of political culture and its displacement by a sentimental culture of feeling or voyeuristic culture of spectacle.

While such critiques of trauma culture have been indispensable for my thinking about trauma as a category of national, and particularly U.S., public culture, I take them in a different direction by exploring how trauma can be a foundation for creating counterpublic spheres rather than evacuating them. I share these critics' concern with the problem of what Lisa Duggan calls the "incredible shrinking public" where attacks on public institutions, ranging from the arts to education to welfare, along with the effects of privatization and globalization have led to severely diminished resources and arenas for public and democratic debate.[5] But I also want to hold out for the presence and promise of cultural formations that bring traumatic histories into the public sphere and use accounts of affective experience to transform our sense of what constitutes a public sphere. As Berlant suggests, "In the patriotically permeated pseudopublic sphere of the present tense, national politics does not involve starting with a view of the nation as a space of struggle violently separated by racial, sexual, and economic inequalities that cut across every imaginable kind of social location."[6] By contrast, this book and the public cultures it documents *do* take as a starting point "the nation as a space of struggle," seeking to illuminate the forms of violence that are forgotten or covered over by the amnesiac powers of national culture, which is adept at using one trauma story to suppress another. This version of national trauma doesn't always lend itself to media spectacle since it frequently operates in the less dramatic terrain of everyday experience and involves groups of people who make

no claim to being representative citizens. Douglas Crimp, for example, writes about the trauma of AIDS for gay men as residing partly in its invisibility as such to the national culture. Even though AIDS has ultimately received considerable attention in the national public sphere, many of its losses, such as unprotected sex, remain unacknowledged or scorned.[7]

Here, lesbian sites of trauma often fly under the radar screen of national public culture. I don't look to Hollywood blockbusters, media events, or national crises such as the Vietnam War or Kennedy assassination; in fact, I resist the way that trauma can be used to reinforce nationalism when constructed as a wound that must be healed in the name of unity. As Kathleen Stewart does in her exploration of Appalachian culture, I focus on a "a space on the side of the road"—locations of culture that often seem too local or specific to represent the nation; as well, I am alert to the way that transnational perspectives challenge the boundaries of the nation as both geographic and conceptual category. In focusing in particular on lesbian public cultures and other related queer sites, I invoke the categories of identity politics that Wendy Brown critiques, but explore public articulations of trauma that don't look to either identity or the state as a means for the resolution of trauma. Refusing any quickfix solution to trauma, such as telling the story as a mode of declaring an identity or seeking legal redress, the cases that interest me offer the unpredictable forms of politics that emerge when trauma is kept unrelentingly in view rather than contained within an institutional project. I keep open the question of how affective experience gives rise to public culture rather than operating with any presumptions about what constitutes culture or politics, or their conjunction. My investigation of trauma thus becomes an inquiry into how affective experience that falls outside of institutionalized or stable forms of identity or politics can form the basis for public culture.

In opening with a discussion of trauma as a social and cultural category, this book signals its recognition that trauma is the subject of a discourse that has a history. My use of the term comes from a tradition that begins in the nineteenth century, when the term *trauma*, which had previously referred to a physical wound, came to be applied to mental or psychic distress. Medical anthropologist Allan Young locates the origins of trauma discourse in the phenomenon of "railway shock": the accidents that were the inevitable by-product of the new technology of the train produced in some victims symptoms of nervous distress that had no apparent physical basis.[8] Trauma and modernity thus can be understood as mutually constitutive categories; trauma is one of the affective experiences, or to use Raymond Williams's phrase, "structures of feeling," that characterizes the lived experience of capitalism. Other Marxist theorists, most notably Walter Benjamin, have taken up the category of *shock* as a way of describing modern life, particularly in urban contexts, in an effort to characterize its effects on the senses.

For the most part, though, sociocultural approaches to trauma have been overshadowed by psychoanalytic and psychiatric discourse, not only in the work of Freud but also in the investigations of nineteenthcentury researchers, the theories of Freud's contemporary, Pierre Janet (whose theory of dissociation constitutes an alternative to Freud's notion of repression), and more recently, the development of PTSD as a clinical diagnosis. Indeed, psychoanalysis, like trauma, is constituted by the assumption that illness can be psychic, not just physical, and the close affinity and shared history of the two concepts make it difficult to separate them. I seek to resist this tendency, however, by holding on to trauma's historical embeddedness not just in modernity but in a range of historical phenomena, including not only World War I, the Holocaust, and Vietnam but feminist discourses about sexual violence, experiences of migration, and queer activisms. The clinical definition of trauma as ptsd includes a list of symptoms (hyperarousal, numbing, repetition) and a description of the kind of event that produces trauma—"outside the range of usual human experience" in the case of the *Diagnostic*

and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, third edition and revised third edition (DSM–III and IIIR), or involving "actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity" in the case of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition (DSM–IV).[9] I treat trauma instead as a social and cultural discourse that emerges in response to the demands of grappling with the psychic consequences of historical events. Defined culturally rather than clinically, trauma studies becomes an interdisciplinary field for exploring the public cultures created around traumatic events. Trauma becomes a central category for looking at the intersections of emotional and social processes along with the intersections of memory and history; it gives rise to what Marita Sturken and others have called "cultural memory."[10]

An exclusively historicist or constructivist approach to trauma will not alone exhaust its meanings or significance, however. Trauma has exerted a powerful hold over cultural theorists because it offers compelling and urgent cases of unrepresentability that confirm the fundamental assumptions of poststructuralist theory. Especially prominent in this respect is the work of Cathy Caruth, who has pointed out that trauma presents an epistemological challenge, standing at the "limits of our understanding" as well as the crossroads of the "complex relation between knowing and not knowing."[11] Caruth's influential definition of trauma as "unclaimed experience" shifts attention away from the specificity of the traumatic event to its structural unknowability. Drawing in particular on deconstructive readings of Freud, Caruth repeatedly emphasizes trauma's paradoxes. With similar results, though using not only psychoanalytic but also Marxist approaches, Mark Seltzer notes that trauma discourse is important precisely because it challenges distinctions between the mental and physical, the psychic and social, and the internal and external as locations or sources of pain. Discourses of trauma serve as a vehicle for sorting through the relation between these categories rather than resolving them in a definition. When trauma becomes too exclusively psychologized or medicalized, its capacity to problematize conceptual schemes, the exploration of which is one of cultural theory's contributions to trauma studies, is lost.

I take a certain distance from Caruth's universalizing form of theorizing about trauma. Her work is quite portable to a range of contexts because of the abstractness of her formulations. By consistently stressing questions of epistemology and trauma as structurally unknowable, she flattens out the specificities of trauma in a given historical and political context. While Caruth does not always acknowledge the historical origins of her work (and resists historicist readings of Freud, for example), her own work is rooted in the texts of Freud and has strong ties to Holocaust studies. Furthermore, Caruth focuses on trauma as catastrophic event rather than on everyday trauma. Drawing on Freud, she uses the example of the "accident" as a way of describing trauma's contingency and lack of agency—a model that may not work well for traumatic histories that emerge from systemic contexts. By contrast, I seek to remain alert to the historical locations out of which theories of trauma arise and the possible limitations of those models for other contexts. This presumption is necessary in order to make room for the category of sexual trauma and the lesbian contexts from which most of my cases are taken—instances that might otherwise seem tangential to a discussion of trauma. Without rejecting the emphasis that Caruth and others place on trauma's unrepresentability, I try to rearticulate that insight through a set of examples that are themselves the locus of new theories of trauma.

A PTSD clinical diagnosis defines trauma as an overwhelming event that produces certain kinds of symptoms in the patient. Poststructuralist theory defines it as an event that is unrepresentable. I want to think about trauma as part of the affective language that describes life under capitalism. I'm interested in how shock and injury are made socially meaningful, paradigmatic even, within cultural experience. I want to focus on how traumatic events refract outward to produce all kinds of affective

responses and not just clinical symptoms. Moreover, in contrast to the individualist approaches of clinical psychology, I'm concerned with trauma as a collective experience that generates collective responses. I am compelled by historical understandings of trauma as a way of describing how we live, and especially how we live affectively.

Four theoretical allegiances—feminism, critical race theory, Marxism, and queer theory—each of which offers contributions to and problems for theories of trauma, serve as points of departure for this study. From feminism comes an interest in bridging the sometimes missing intersections between sexual and national traumas, and the sense of trauma as everyday; from critical race theory, especially African American studies, comes an understanding of trauma as foundational to national histories and passed down through multiple generations; from Marxism comes a dialectical approach to the intersection of lived experience and systemic social structures and to trauma's place in the social history of sensation; and from queer theory comes a critique of pathologizing approaches to trauma and an archive of examples from lesbian public cultures. These theoretical resources have been necessary in order to do justice to a series of cases that never seem to quite measure up to expectations that trauma be catastrophic and extreme; I'm interested instead in the way trauma digs itself in at the level of the everyday, and in the incommensurability of large-scale events and the ongoing material details of experience. Drawing on these theories, I hope to seize authority over trauma discourses from medical and scientific discourse in order to place it back in the hands of those who make culture, as well as to forge new models for how affective life can serve as the foundation for public culture.

Roller Coasters and Little Women

When my examples of lesbian trauma culture seem a little too slight or marginal, I remind myself that Lisa Kron approaches the Holocaust in her performance piece *2.5 Minute Ride* by talking about roller coasters and *Little Women*. It's a story about visiting Auschwitz with her survivor father so that he can see the place where his parents were killed, but it's also about how much her father loves to ride the giant roller coaster at the family's annual outing to the Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky, Ohio. Kron talks about being overcome with horror by one of the Auschwitz displays, yet she also describes crying at her brother's wedding in a burst of emotion that reminds her of the women sobbing in the dark during a matinee screening of *Little Women*. *2.5 Minute Ride* insists on the queerness of emotional life, documenting unpredictable surges of feeling that fall outside the terrain of the sublime horror of Holocaust testimony or the sentimentality of U.S. popular culture's women's genres.

Like a roller coaster, *2.5 Minute Ride* careens, often wildly, not only between widely disparate stories but between widely disparate affects, taking the audience from humor to traumatic rupture without even pausing for a theatrical beat. Kron stresses the challenge of addressing an audience that comes already equipped with a huge repository of Holocaust representations, which are the product of successful efforts to create a culture around this historical trauma.[12] She painstakingly attempts to avoid some of the affects frequently prompted by such representations, including empty sentimentality and its not-so-distant relation, incapacitating awe. Can a trip to Auschwitz be something other than another version of a trip to an amusement park, where history's terrors are domesticated into safely consumable artifacts and emotions? By juxtaposing stories of these two kinds of visits, Kron forces scrutiny of the limits and inadequacies of the quest for an encounter with trauma, testimony, and the Holocaust that are implicit in trips to both Auschwitz and the theater.

Lisa Kron, performance artist and author of 2.5 Minute Ride. Photo by Kristina LeGros. Courtesy of Lisa Kron.

2.5 Minute Ride provokes some of the same questions about sensation as does its namesake, the roller coaster. How is it that extreme sensations, including fear and terror, can be entertaining? Does

Lisa's aging and blind father delight in roller coasters out of some version of Freud's repetition compulsion, seeking to replicate extreme terror in order to master it? Or is the thrill one that requires a Marxist explanation of the amusement park, and especially its scary rides, as the utopian domestication of capitalism's industrial technology along with the accidents that are the by-product of speed and novelty? The image of the roller coaster in *2.5 Minute Ride* serves as a cautionary reminder of Kron's desire to avoid representations of horror that serve merely to entertain her audience. The roller coaster is also a resonant figure for exploring trauma, given the centrality of railway travel not only in nineteenth-century discourses of trauma but in memories of the Holocaust.

Challenging stereotypical expectations about the emotional impact of visiting concentration camps, Lisa's biggest fear is that she will feel nothing at Auschwitz, that it will be too structured and too much like a Disneyland-style amusement park for her to be able to get close to what happened to her grandparents. She is also terrified by the responsibility of being a witness to her father's reactions, wondering what will happen if he breaks down and she must comfort him. Witnessing is fraught with ambivalence rather than fulfilling the melodramatic fantasy that the trauma survivor will finally tell all and receive the solace of being heard by a willing and supportive listener. Kron captures the burdens, the everydayness, and also the humor of a witnessing as she and her almost-blind father bumble their way through such material difficulties of tourism in a foreign country as what to eat and how to read signs. In one of her story's most agonizing moments, her father discovers that he has left his eyeglasses inside the camp and they have to go back after closing time to search for them. It's an ordinary and chilling moment simultaneously, exemplifying Kron's attention to the persistence of the everyday in the encounter with trauma.

2.5 Minute Ride's sophisticated approach to the performance of emotion reveals itself in Lisa's experience of being overwhelmed by the emotions she was afraid she wouldn't feel. She says,

> *But when I enter the crematorium for the first time in my life I feel horror. Physical repulsion. I can feel my face contort, my lips pull back. In the gas chamber, my father stops to take his 2:00 pill. This breaks my heart. I stand to the side and cry. Hard. I can feel . . . I can feel the bottom. It's clear to me now that everything in my life before has been a shadow. This is the only reality—what happened to my father and his parents fifty years ago.*

It's not just the crematorium itself that affects her but the poignancy of her ailing father getting on with the business of survival in the midst of it. Yet rather than following through with the performance of this emotion or belaboring the sudden shock of an encounter with death, Lisa abruptly interrupts her story. "You know what this looks like already. I don't know why I'm telling you this. Everybody's seen these images. I'm sure you've seen *Sophie's Choice* and *Schindler's List* and the pictures of the bodies and the bulldozers on pbs. It's on every fifteen minutes practically. I don't know why I'm telling you this. I don't need to describe this to you. I feel like a cliché. Ugh." She reminds her audience that stories of the Holocaust now circulate so widely as to verge dangerously on becoming an everyday experience that no longer has the power to affect people.

By refusing to continue in this vein, Kron alerts her audience that *2.5 Minute Ride* is a different kind of Holocaust story, if it is one at all. It is not about Auschwitz, the concentration camps, or even Holocaust survivors; it is about her relationship with a man who is a survivor, but who is also her father. Affectively, *2.5 Minute Ride* gestures at the emotional abyss but won't go there, at least not in the expected way; at the moment of confrontation with the Holocaust's simultaneous unrepresentability and hyperrepresentability, Kron swerves, as though imitating one of the roller coaster's unexpected dips and curves, in another direction. She stresses her father's everyday life:

that he shops at the Meijer's superstore in Lansing, Michigan, that he will cook you dinner, and that after exiting from the Mean Streak roller coaster with his terrified daughter in tow, he's ready to ride it again. Kron wants to jolt her audience out of its customary responses, including not only the numbness of no response but also the dutiful feelings of sympathy and horror, in order to confront them with other affects such as humor, the poignancy of everyday life, and the moral uncertainty of her father's claim that he was lucky to have been born a Jew so that he couldn't possibly have become a Nazi. *2.5 Minute Ride* offers unrepresentability not as awe-inspiring but as material necessity. Indeed, the challenge it addresses is how to make room for another kind of story in the face of the hyperrepresentation of the Holocaust and its saturation of the cultural landscape by a proliferation of horrific images. The daughter of the Holocaust survivor faces a dilemma in attempting to document her father's life: "When I try to tell his stories I begin to hyperventilate and I don't know why." By performing the realities of emotions that are varied and that include humor, boredom, and resistance, Kron expands the emotional archive of trauma.

2.5 Minute Ride's unusual approach to affect is especially evident in its exploration of sentimentality in the story of Lisa's brother's wedding at the Seaview Jewish Center in Canarsie to a woman whom he met online. Just as the juxtaposition of the roller coaster with Auschwitz foregrounded the dangers of sensationalism, this segment uses the wedding to suggest that sentimentality is another kind of popular affect that a trauma culture must circumvent. The critique of the sentimentality of weddings is facilitated by the overt focus on lesbianism and on how Lisa and her girlfriend Peg are subjected to the indignities of being the odd couple at the scene of compulsory heterosexuality. Kron uses humor to gesture at the lived experience of homophobia and its manifestations in family rituals that don't quite know what to make of queer children, even if they don't overtly exclude them. There are no melodramatic scenes of conflict, only the dilemma of figuring out how to explain who your girlfriend is to the friends of the family.

Ambivalent about the wedding, Lisa finds herself unexpectedly crying, responding in spite of herself to the moment when her parents walk her brother to the chuppah. She describes her feelings with reference to one of U.S. sentimental culture's most important texts, *Little Women*, adapted for one of its most important media, the Hollywood film.

> *You know a couple of years ago I went to see the movie Little Women. And it was in a big theater and there were only about thirty people there and they were all women and were all sitting separately, scattered about in this huge theater. And when Beth dies, all the women in the theater were crying but it wasn't the usual quiet sniffling you hear sometimes in a theater. These women were racked with sobs. All around me I could hear noises like: [Makes huge, hiccuping crying noises]. And that's how I was crying at my brother's wedding.*

By making this comparison, Kron opens up the possibility that her response is merely sentimental, but in this instance, the sentimental genre, whether the weepie or the wedding, enables something more. She continues:

> *It had never dawned on me in a million years that I would feel anything other than a big, judgey reaction to the whole thing. But when I saw my father all I could see was the soul in this little old man who lost his mother and his father and his country and his culture and it's all gone forever and this was the closest he was ever going to come to it again and it didn't feel like enough and it felt like too much for me and so I cried.*

At the Seaview Jewish Center as much as at Auschwitz, Lisa is surprised by emotion, experiencing an encounter with the tremendous losses that pervade her father's life. The moment offers testimony to

the queer paths taken by trauma's affects. And not one to indulge in sentiment or sobs for too long, Lisa closes the story by reverting to humor: "And so I cried and then I made everyone sitting around me take an oath that they hadn't seen me doing it because I can't be going around crying at weddings." This, too, is part of trauma's affective archive: the resistance to vulnerability for which the dismissal of sentimentality and the canon of women's popular culture serves as a touchstone.

2.5 Minute Ride certainly shares with Seltzer, Berlant, and Brown a critique of sentimental as well as trauma culture in its disdain for easy emotional experiences and its concern with the ultimately deadening circulation of images of the Holocaust. But its reference to *Little Women* cuts both ways, serving not only as a model of what *2.5 Minute Ride* seeks to distance itself from but also as a model for its aspirations to affect its audiences, and to find a way to produce feelings that are unpredictable and difficult. Moreover, in its effort to chronicle everyday emotions and the relation between a father and daughter in order to intervene against clichéd or glib responses to the Holocaust archive, it remains committed to the possibility of performing trauma and emotion in the public sphere. Using the genre of solo performance, one of whose primary resources is autobiography, Kron approaches affective experience as unsettling, unpredictable, and necessary.

For Kron, humor is much easier than tears, and while it often seems to displace other emotions, it would be more accurate to see it as a way of expressing what cannot be expressed otherwise. Humor becomes a way of approaching the Holocaust through indirection, of warding off emotional breakdown with a joke. The suspense of the approach to Auschwitz is produced and disrupted by Kron's sudden switches to the other stories that she is telling; incorporating them into the play gives her a kind of defense strategy, a way of avoiding the topic when it gets too close. The rapid shifts in both narrative and affect have a distancing effect, keeping the Auschwitz story from becoming too sentimental or horrific, but they also possess their own kind of affective power. The sudden shift to humor is another way of conveying the enormity of the Holocaust. It keeps the roller coaster of affect moving just as it looks like it's about to fall into the abyss, and the rapid transition from horror to humor, from the Holocaust to the everyday, dramatically underscores their incommensurability. There are gaps and silences in *2.5 Minute Ride*, most graphically evident in the slides from the family photographs with which Kron opens the show in mock documentary form. Although Lisa vividly describes the images, the screen is blank. Like the empty slides, *2.5 Minute Ride's* abrupt transitions between narratives tell a story by not telling it, and the affects it produces are ones the audience may not have been expecting.

Kron sees herself as drawing on a specifically Jewish tradition of performance that includes vaudeville and the borscht belt cabarets with their stand-up comedians. By forging this connection, she indicates that the American Jewish response to the Holocaust is influenced by a culture of Jewish immigration and diaspora in which theater and entertainment public cultures have been central. More generally, her strategy suggests that trauma is affectively negotiated in culturally specific ways. As an approach to the Holocaust, though, humor can seem especially taboo or transgressive—a reminder that responses to trauma are often constrained by (normalizing) demands for appropriate affects.[13] Kron uses her jokes about whether or not to pay for parking at Auschwitz or the intrusions of a group of Israeli tourists there as reminders of the incommensurability between visiting the site as a tourist and having been imprisoned or killed there.

In addition to using Jewish traditions of humor, Kron makes expert use of a genre that has strong ties to queer culture: performance art. Forced to draw on memory and personal experience to construct an archive in the wake of a dominant culture that provides either silence or homophobic representations of their lives, queers have used solo performance as a forum for personal histories

that are also social and cultural ones.[14] There is a significant link between performance art and testimony in terms of a shared desire to build culture out of memory. The life stories of performance art are often structured around, if not traumatic experience, moments of intense affect that are transformative or revealing. They also often revolve around family histories, mapping the queer offspring of heterosexual parents and cultural traditions; in this respect, solo performance is well situated to contribute to the current need to explore the transgenerational transmission of the Holocaust to the children of survivors, which has produced new and unusual approaches ranging from Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory to Art Spiegelman's use of the comic book form in *Maus*.[15] Kron closes *2.5 Minute Ride* with a metaphor from the theater. Mentioning how putting your hand on a chair can make you seem bigger on stage, she states, "I put my hand on my father's life." In the end, she cannot tell her father's story or an Auschwitz one; she can best represent these through roller coaster rides and wedding sentiments, told in her own queer way.

I've begun with an example that occupies the terrain of both queer culture and the Holocaust to highlight the differences between this book and the more customary sites of trauma studies. The cultural texts explored here are more like *2.5 Minute Ride* than Holocaust testimony, occupying a frequently oblique relation both in content and genre to historical sites of trauma. Not only is this often the condition of lesbian representations of trauma and responses to trauma but this obliqueness or tangentialness can also be described as queer. It produces a different theory of trauma than work rooted in the example of the Holocaust, which has been a key reference point for the most influential trauma theory in cultural studies. For instance, Caruth's theory of trauma as "unclaimed experience" has circulated within amilieu that includes work by Geoffrey Hartman, Dominick LaCapra, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Lawrence Langer, and others that is centered on the Holocaust.[16] Indeed, some theorists, such as LaCapra, have suggested that the Holocaust stands as the repressed event that guides poststructuralist theory, particularly in its European contexts—a historical locatedness that is especially likely to be lost in the translation to a U.S. context. Perhaps the turn to the specificity of the Holocaust on the part of some of these theorists represents the recognition of this repressed history, but it is also, I think, motivated by debates specific to poststructuralist theory's status in the U.S. academy and especially the vexed question of the politics of theory.[17] The Holocaust offers validation of theory's applicability to concrete and pressing historical circumstances, and it serves as a compelling example that unrepresentability and aporia can be integral to lived experience rather than the deconstruction of experience. Recognizing the significance of the Holocaust in this body of trauma theory is crucial to evaluating its historical specificity and the possible limits of its applicability to other contexts.

Yet even as the sites of trauma explored here are not comparable to the Holocaust, they are certainly informed by Holocaust studies and memory. Testimony, in particular, serves as an important example of the radical approach to the archive that trauma can demand. Such repositories as the Yale Fortunoff Archive and the Shoah History Foundation seek not just to produce a document or record but to create new forms of historical memory. Especially prominent is the resistance to redemption in such work as Claude Lanzmann's 1985 documentary film *Shoah* and Lawrence Langer's *Holocaust Testimonies*.[18] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's work in *Testimony* speaks to the specificity of testimony as cultural and historical genre, an event that seeks a witness but may not find one, an interactive occasion in which the relation between speaker and hearer is crucial to the narrative, which becomes performative rather than constative. [19] This process of testimony has implications for understanding history, raising questions about the role of memory; for understanding therapy, opening

up the possibility of a public form of storytelling, but one that involves the work of psychoanalysis; and for understanding culture, since the mode of representation of trauma is complex and challenges the very possibility of representation.

There are certainly resonant sympathies between the approach to testimony and representation in Holocaust culture and Kron's oblique approach in *2.5 Minute Ride*. Kron's sensibility is echoed in Lanzmann's interest in the material details that draw out the embeddedness of Holocaust experience in everyday life, such as Abraham Bomba's experience of cutting hair in the gas chambers, or survivor Simon Srebnik's return to Poland and the casual anti-Semitism of the Poles' ongoing memories of life when the Jews were still present in their towns.[20] Like Kron, Lanzmann journeys to the present sites of the concentration camps in search of the traces of traumatic history; her roller coaster ride finds its counterpart in his images of railroad tracks and the re-creation of the train's approach to the camps. Moreover, her interest in addressing the Holocaust through her own experience of her relation to her father and in getting her father's story shares with archives of testimony an interest in history from the vantage point of memory and experience.

Thus, the queer sensibility I find in Kron's work is not an exclusive property of lesbian or gay culture. It can be found in other places as well, including one of the most significant texts of Holocaust culture. Indeed, the links between them are a reflection of my use of both a minoritizing approach, exploring the specificity of lesbian texts, and a universalizing one, emphasizing their continuities with other texts of trauma.[21] While linked to Holocaust testimony, *2.5 Minute Ride's* use of performance and memoir is distinctive because it tackles questions about the intergenerational transmission of Holocaust memory. Kron's efforts to grapple with the story of being the lesbian daughter of a father who is a survivor suggest that there are many Holocaust stories to be told, particularly as the original survivors die and the Holocaust lives on through intergenerational forms of transmission and testimony. Marianne Hirsch speaks of the phenomenon of postmemory as it applies to the children of survivors, who have an uncanny relation to their parents' experience, which continues to mark subsequent generations.[22] It is this subject position, more than that of survivors, that often informs my project. I thus look at lesbians who are AIDS activists and caretakers rather than themselves HIV+. I look at the effects of colonialism on those who are immigrants to the United States or whose parents were, and at how migrations of all kinds are the scene for traumas of cultural diaspora. I explore how trauma manifests itself in everyday sexual lives in which the vulnerability of bodies and psyches is negotiated. I examine the force field around trauma, the low-level "insidious" way that it continues to make itself felt even at a remove from the experience itself. Roller coasters and *Little Women* are as much a part of these trauma stories as the death camps.

Feminism and Sexual Trauma

Although my approach to trauma as everyday and not just catastrophic can be gleaned from Holocaust culture, it emerges more directly from my interest in the contested status of sexual trauma, which has been the focus of both feminist critiques of definitions of trauma and significant controversies *within* feminism. One goal here is to show how a queer perspective more attuned to the vagaries of sexuality can resolve some of the conundrums sexual trauma has posed for feminists in their efforts to give it a central place within clinical definitions of trauma. Although the experience of Vietnam War veterans was instrumental in the establishment of PTSD as a diagnosis in the third edition of the DSM in 1980, increasing attention to rape, sexual abuse, and domestic violence, especially from feminist psychologists, also played a key role in the call for a clinical diagnosis.[23] At the same time, sexual trauma seems to be in danger of invisibility, especially due to the gendered divide between private and public spheres. As Judith Herman, one of the most important feminist experts on trauma, puts it, "Not until the women's liberation movement of the 1970s was it recognized that the most common posttraumatic stress disorders are those not of men in war but of women in civilian life. The real conditions of women's lives are hidden in the sphere of the personal, in private life."[24] Yet as Herman herself notes, Freud addressed both forms of trauma, although there are tensions between his account of the event-based reality of shell shock as a form of traumatic neurosis and his controversial abandonment of the seduction theory in favor of an understanding of the origins of childhood trauma in fantasy. Whether acknowledged or not, embedded within the history of trauma discourse are debates about gender and sexuality as well as about the relation between private and public spheres that have preoccupied feminist theorists. The insights of feminist theory thus have important implications for trauma theories, and moreover, controversies over the truth of recovered memory have created a situation in which the status of feminism is bound up with sexual trauma.

Especially powerful because of its combination of popular psychology's accessibility, clinical psychology's authority, and a feminist commitment to social change, Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* uses the language of separate spheres to describe the challenge of integrating the feminine world of sexual trauma with the masculine one of war trauma. Although Herman's book doesn't have the exercises or lengthy personal narratives of *The Courage to Heal*, it outlines the symptoms of trauma and steps toward recovery in a way that can aid readers to diagnose and understand themselves, and it includes personal testimony from trauma survivors. The author of one of the earliest and most influential books on incest, *Father-Daughter Incest*, Herman makes a bid in *Trauma and Recovery* to bring a feminist perspective to trauma in a global context and to write a book that will be accessible to a general readership.[25] Tracing the history of discussions of trauma over the last century, Herman locates watershed moments: Freud's discovery of hysteria, the diagnosis of PTSD and its inclusion in the DSM after the Vietnam War, and feminist attention to sexual abuse. Herman's historicizing approach to trauma, which is somewhat unexpected for an analysis based in scientific research, stems from her feminist politics; one of the book's claims is that attention to trauma has only been achieved when accompanied by a social movement, such as feminism or the antiwar movement. She therefore leaves room for the political and social in trauma cultures, especially evident in her insistence on the need for collective and social forms of recovery in addition to individual therapy. In its synthesizing approach, Herman's book certainly deserves its wide reputation.

But although Herman's historical account is suggestive, it is not quite historical enough given its appeal to a teleological narrative about the progress manifest in the political and social recognition of trauma. She tends to view "trauma" as a discovery rather than an invention, and even though she

assigns great importance to social institutions and political movements in addressing trauma, she also appeals to science and medicine to establish its characteristics. Most significantly, in her effort to link war trauma with sexual trauma, Herman naturalizes trauma even as she historicizes it. In order to equate its different forms, she emphasizes psychic reality as a common denominator, outlining the symptoms of traumatic response—such as hyperarousal, intrusion (including flashbacks), and constriction or numbing—that are found in all cases of PTSD.[26] This search for the core symptoms of ptsd reflects the tendency of clinical psychology to medicalize psychic pain, another exemplary case of which is the contemporary zeal for pharmacological treatment of depression.[27] Herman articulates a model of trauma's effects and its stages of recovery that is common to all traumatic experience, seeking to equalize the differences that distinctions between the private and public spheres foster. "The hysteria of women and the combat neurosis of men are one. Recognizing the commonality of affliction may even make it possible at times to transcend the immense gulf that separates the public sphere of war and politics—the world of men—and the private sphere of domestic life— the world of women."[28]

While Herman's approach has considerable strength, I depart from it in crucial ways. First, I reject the search for a universal model of trauma because it runs the risk of erasing essential differences between traumatic experiences, differences of historical context and geopolitical location, as well as the specificities of individual experiences that can be lost in a diagnosis that finds the same symptoms everywhere. Second, in recognition that the model of separate spheres can reproduce the very split it attempts to analyze, I question the relegation of the sexual to the domain of the private sphere, looking instead for the public dimensions of sexual trauma. As Cathy Davidson suggests in her introduction to the tellingly titled collection "No More Separate Spheres!" it is no longer useful to presume that sexuality, intimacy, affect, and other categories of experience typically assigned to the private sphere do not also pervade public life.[29] My efforts to apply this perspective to trauma studies are informed by recent thinking not only in feminist but queer theory, too. For example, queer understandings of public sex indicate that the public/private divide warrants reconceptualization.[30]

One of the most useful contributions of a feminist approach to trauma, and one that I endorse, is the focus on trauma as everyday that unravels definitions of the term. Herman's work, for instance, strains the boundaries of a universal model of trauma when she argues for the creation of a new diagnostic category, "complex post-traumatic stress disorder," to describe the effects of repeated abuse, such as those suffered by children in violent families. Although her argument is grounded in problematic equations between the trauma of enforced captivity in circumstances of war and torture and the more invisible yet no less significant forms of captivity that abused children and battered wives may experience in the home, her attempt to call attention to the latter is an important project for trauma studies. More persuasively, Laura Brown's crucial formulation of "insidious" trauma to describe the everyday experiences of sexism that add to the effects of more punctual traumatic experiences, such as rape, forges connections between trauma and more systemic forms of oppression. [31] The definition of trauma begins to invert itself when Brown suggests that the diagnostic stipulation that trauma must be "an event outside the range of human experience" excludes insidious forms of trauma that are all too often persistent and normalized. Even though both Brown and Herman continue to work with the categories of trauma and PTSD, their critiques are significant. (Indeed, the most recent edition of the DSM has altered the definition of trauma to remove the stipulation that trauma be outside the bounds of the usual or normal.)[32]

Fundamental to my inquiry is the conviction that insidious or everyday forms of trauma, especially

those emerging from systemic forms of oppression, ultimately demand an understanding of trauma that moves beyond medicalized constructions of PTSD. More so than distinctions between private and public trauma, those between trauma as everyday and ongoing and trauma as a discrete event may be the most profound consequence of a gendered approach. The challenge of insidious trauma or chronic PTSD (although this category may contain it again in the confines of a diagnosis) is that it resists the melodramatic structure of an easily identifiable origin of trauma. Once the causes of trauma become more diffuse, so too do the cures, opening up the need to change social structures more broadly rather than just fix individual people. Yet as the links between sexual abuse and sexism show, event trauma can play a prominent role in drawing attention to more insidious forms of trauma. In the chapters that follow, experiences that are connected to trauma but may not necessarily themselves be traumatic—such as sex acts, immigration, activism, and caretaking—will be explored in order to move beyond the expectation that trauma will be a catastrophic event. Remaining alert to the category of insidious trauma helps to avoid the rigid binarisms of gendered distinctions between private and public trauma or between sexual and national trauma that can often be reproduced even in feminist work that seeks to transcend the separate spheres paradigm.[33]

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Feminist efforts to foreground sexual trauma have had a controversial and vexed history over the last couple of decades, raising questions about the strategic value of forging a feminist politics around this issue. The heated debates during the 1990s about recovered memory suggest that the risks of such a strategy are high. On the one side, feminists argue that memories of sexual abuse should be taken seriously as the origin of women's problems, and on the other side, parents and clinicians speak of false memory syndrome in asserting that recovered memories of sexual abuse can be implanted in overly suggestible clients. Feminists themselves have also maintained that one of the hazards of the recovery movement has been a shift from movement politics toward therapeutic culture as the means to a transformation that has become personal rather than social.[34] Fierce debates about recovered memory and ritual abuse have produced their own versions of a backlash that has been directed at both therapeutic practice and feminism.[35] In a provocative critique of the debates, which includes criticism of both Herman's trauma theory and *The Courage to Heal*'s fundamentalist feminism, Janice Haaken argues that a more nuanced psychotherapy is demanded if sexual abuse and recovered memories are understood as part of a more pervasive sexism.[36] Haaken proposes that feminism may have seized on sexual trauma as a way of conveniently locating the evils of sexism. Intimations of sexual abuse have become the sensational evidence for a feminism that looks for literal and incontrovertible proof of sexism. Drawing on feminist psychoanalytic theory, Haaken claims that memories of abuse can be understood as fantasies that are not "false" in any empirical sense but that provide a vehicle for the articulation of sexism and forms of sexual trauma that may not be as overt as the fantasy scenarios. Boldly combining feminist clinical psychology and poststructuralist feminism, Haaken renegotiates feminism's still intensely contested relation to Freud's seduction theory. Like her, I am wary of the possible hazards for feminism of focusing too exclusively on sexual victimhood and abuse. It can be difficult to articulate this concern in a way that does not capitulate to the forces of backlash. But there must be room for a critique that far from dismissing feminism for making women into victims, in fact seeks a more robust and radical version of feminism.

This book forges a way out of the impasse that pervades the recovered memory debate through the combined power of the insights of queer theory and the practices of lesbian public cultures. As influential as Herman's book might be in calling attention to sexual trauma, it leaves little space for

sexual practices that have flourished within lesbian publics, such as S/M and butch-femme sexuality as well as sex-positive discourses more generally. Herman belongs more to the antipornography than the pro-sex feminists; she implies, for example, that S/M fantasies are a repetition of trauma rather than a possible cure when she briefly mentions a client who considered her S/M fantasies to be an identification with the perpetrator.[37] Haaken touches briefly on S/M and sex radicalism, which could well bolster her position, but she also implies that this sex culture may be only a reaction against the sexual repressiveness of the women's movement—a kind of acting out against the mothers. There is a missed opportunity here for understanding the possible contributions of sex radicalism to a more general conception of trauma, and it is a contribution that I seek to make here. In chapters on butch-femme sexuality and incest, I will scrutinize texts and practices that give rise to new theoretical articulations of the relation between sex and trauma as forms of bodily violation that destroy the self 's integrity. Sexual discourses that fearlessly and shamelessly explore the imbrications of pleasure and danger in sexual practice provide a model for approaches to trauma that resist pathologizing judgments.

A related agenda in exploring lesbian public sex cultures is to respond to feminist critiques of therapeutic culture, and popular culture more generally, as well as to the more sympathetic approaches of cultural studies, which has examined a range of genres including self-help groups, talk shows, melodramas, and pharmacology. Lesbian culture offers suggestive examples for analysis because it circulates within already formed publics, thereby addressing the concerns of reception studies, which in its search for resistance, has often run aground on the individualized nature of consumption. The intimacies of sexuality have been the material for a range of lesbian public cultures, including a print culture of books about sex, consumer stores such as Good Vibrations and Toys in Babeland that are as much community centers as (thriving) businesses, performance cultures, and sexual subcultures organized around an increasing proliferation of sexual practices.

"What is the story I will not tell? The story I do not tell is the only one that is a lie. It is the story of the life I do not lead, without complication, mystery, courage, or the transfiguration of the flesh."[38] The feminist movement could not have a better spokesperson for the power of giving voice to incest than Dorothy Allison, who believes in speaking the truth. Allison refuses, though, to erase the rough edges from her experience. She offers an uncompromising picture of how her history of sexual abuse is inseparable from her southern white trash origins, and her experience of lesbian butch-femme culture informs her willingness to represent a sexuality that incorporates danger, anger, and revenge without fearing it as trauma's pathological symptom. She resists oversimplified stories about incest in part because she resists reductive stories about class:

> *The stories other people would tell about my life, my mother's life, my sisters', uncles', cousins', and lost girlfriends'—those are the stories that could destroy me, erase me, mock and deny me. I tell my stories louder all the time: mean and ugly stories, funny, almost bitter stories; passionate, desperate stories—all of them have to be told in order not to tell the one the world wants, the story of us broken, the story of us never laughing out loud, never learning to enjoy sex, never being able to love or trust love again, the story in which all that survives is the flesh.*[39]

Integral to Allison's project of writing a different story of sexual trauma is her attention to class and to the project of rewriting U.S. cultural history to incorporate her version of white trash culture. In its use of the tools of queer theory to give sexual trauma a more vivid presence in and intervention into trauma studies, her work exemplifies what it means not to settle for a simple or narrow account of sexual trauma. So often manifesting itself as insidious trauma, sexual trauma seeps into other

categories. One of this book's projects, then, is to situate sexual trauma in relation to trauma as a national category as well as to incorporate it into national and transnational histories that address the question of trauma.

National Trauma

Whether it is the Holocaust claimed as a pivotal event of twentieth century Western European history, the Vietnam War claimed as a crisis in U.S. national history, or slavery and diaspora claimed as fundamental to modernity, trauma histories are frequently taken up as national urgencies, histories that must be remembered and resolved in order for the nation to survive a crisis or sustain its integrity. Although I earlier mentioned critiques of U.S. culture as a trauma culture, it is also the case that constructing the history of the United States from the vantage point of trauma produces a critical American studies, one that revises a celebratory account of the nation and instead illuminates its emergence from a history that includes capitalism and economic exploitation, war, colonialism and the genocide of native peoples, and slavery, diaspora, and migration. This version of American studies converges with transnational approaches to the United States, making it possible to explore the tenuous borders (both literal and ideological) of the United States as a nation along with the violences that sustain, defend, and/or expand its borders.[40] The intersections of trauma studies and American studies are visible in the work of cultural critics such as Kali Tal and Marita Sturken, both of whom explore how the United States negotiates the memory of the Vietnam War in a range of ways that include the experiences of Vietnam veterans, antiwar protesters, and citizens at home.[41] Events are claimed as national trauma only through cultural and political work. This production of a public culture frequently privileges some experiences and excludes others; Lisa Lowe, for example, opens her investigation of Asian American identity in *Immigrant Acts* by invoking the trauma of the Vietnam War alongside the tensions between remembering U.S. experiences and erasing other experiences such as those of the Vietnamese.[42]

A notable feature of the project of examining national history as trauma history is the emphasis on the role of personal memory in the construction of public histories and memorials. For instance, Sturken uses the concept of "cultural memory" to explain the mechanisms by which public life operates not just in the political arena but in the production of cultural forms such as films, memorials, and oral histories.[43] The turn to memory is also a turn to the affective or felt experience of history as central to the construction of public cultures, to give a range of people the authority to represent historical experience, and often implicitly to suggest a plurality of points of view. Yet questions remain about what counts as a trauma history and whose feelings matter in the national public sphere.

Indeed, there are many forgotten histories that have yet to receive full attention within trauma studies even as they have begun to transform American studies. A necessary agenda for the intersection of trauma studies and American studies is a fuller examination of racialized histories of genocide, colonization, slavery, and migration that are part of the violences of modernity, and whose multigenerational legacies require new vocabularies of trauma. Particularly inspiring for this book has been African American and African diaspora studies, which even when it has addressed trauma only implicitly has done so in powerful ways. For example, abolitionist movements offer an important way of historicizing the field of trauma studies, representing an early instance of the discourses of human rights that ultimately ground a post– World War II, post–United Nations perspective on global human rights abuses, which are the public arena of transnational trauma discourse. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century genres of slave narrative and sentimental novel, which sought to publicize and mobilize political action around slavery through accounts of individual experience, are valuable for trauma studies because their complex rhetorical strategies and modes of production are a reminder that there is no transparent representation of trauma nor any straightforward

context of reception. The debates generated by this textual history, including critiques of sentimentality, discussions of the role of white abolitionists in presenting slave narrative, and the strategic performances of slave testimony, have been instructive background for my own inquiry.[44] Also influential has been the return to the history of slavery within contemporary culture, in novels such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* or Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, or in legal scholar Patricia Williams's essays about her inheritance as the descendant of both a slaveowning lawyer and a slave.[45] This work unveils another version of insidious trauma, by tracking how contemporary experiences of racism rest on the foundation of traumatic events such as slavery, lynching, and harassment. It demands models that can explain the links between trauma and everyday experience, the intergenerational transmission from past to present, and the cultural memory of trauma as central to the formation of identities and publics.

To return to the traumatic history of slavery and African diaspora as an explanatory context for contemporary racisms and antiracisms is to acknowledge that this history continues to have a legacy in the present, and to grapple also with an equally powerful legacy of its forgetting. Unlike more recent trauma histories where there are still living survivors, the history of slavery presents the challenge of a missing archive, not only because of its generational distance but also because even in its time it was inadequately documented, or more precisely, systematically undocumented given restrictions on literacy for slaves, and governed subsequently by racisms that have suppressed subaltern knowledges. This traumatic history necessarily demands unusual strategies of representation. An excellent example is Avery Gordon's concept of haunting, which offers a compelling account of how the past remains simultaneously hidden and present in both material practices and the psyche, in both visible and invisible places.[46] The project of addressing the past is a risky one when haunting is its mode of appearance, and Gordon's work reckons with both the necessity and dangers of trafficking with ghosts. This trauma archive offers new approaches to national history and requires acknowledgment of affective experience as a mode of participation in public life.

Carmelita Tropicana, performance artist and author of Milk of Amnesia. Courtesy of Carmelita Tropicana.

The history of the African diaspora and slavery is not only a U.S. one but a transnational history of the Americas and the black Atlantic. I would argue more generally that an investigation of national history as trauma history tends to strain at the boundaries of the nation and necessarily opens up a transnational perspective. Although this book does not focus directly on the history of slavery and African diaspora, it contributes to the project of investigating racialized trauma histories by exploring how contemporary queer diasporic publics address and make use of the traumatic aspects of transnational migration histories. As an example of this phenomenon, I turn to another piece of solo performance art, Carmelita Tropicana's experience of Collective Unconscious Memory Appropriation Attack (CUMAA) in *Milk of Amnesia*. The alter ego of Cuban American performance artist Alina Troyano, Carmelita Tropicana, a regular fixture of downtown New York's performance scene, is an extravagant diva whose camp humor and expressiveness embody a queer ethnicity. Like *2.5 Minute Ride*, *Milk of Amnesia* is the story of a journey to a site of memory; having left Cuba for the United States at the age of seven, Carmelita returns to the island with hopes of recovering the memories that have been lost to her while living in exile and that have left her confused about her cultural citizenship. Her assimilation into U.S. culture and her forced separation from Cuba have produced a loss of memory that can be trauma's symptom.

Unfortunately, Carmelita's attempt to recover her past turns out to be harder than she expected. Wandering the streets and culture of Havana in a state of expectation, she fails to experience the floods of memory that will return her to herself. Finally, though, when she visits the graveyard of some of her ancestors, she is overcome by a flashback. But it is not her own memory that comes to her. She instead channels the memories of a horse that belonged to a Spanish conquistador and made one of the first exploratory journeys to the Americas. In an echo of the Middle Passage, the horse remembers the terrible conditions of the boat, the beauty of the island not yet transformed by contact, and the genocide of the native peoples through enforced labor and disease. Carmelita has fallen prey to CUMAA. In the absence of her own memories, she has borrowed someone else's, not even a person's but an animal's. Yet these memories are also partly her own, for her contemporary queer Cuban American identity can trace its lineage back to a transnational history of colonization and genocide that is as much a structuring condition of her life as is Cuba's subsequent history of U.S. neocolonialism, revolution, and the debilitating effects of the U.S. trade embargo and restrictions on travel and immigration. Carmelita's queer and traumatized relation to Cuba is not hers alone, and her susceptibility to and dependence on CUMAA as a way of accessing memory is one of the conditions of exile. Moreover, it is a version of exile that must assert what José Muñoz, one of Tropicana's most astute critics, has called "disidentification," articulating its relation to Cuba in a way that does not play into U.S. or neoconservative Cuban American positions.[47] Carmelita's access to her memory aims to intervene in amnesiac stories of assimilation or immigration that uncritically celebrate the U.S. and American national identity or that assume a simplistic position either for or against Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution.

After her CUMAA experience, Carmelita has somewhat greater success in her search for flashbacks, visiting the house where she lived as a child (and reassuring the current occupants that she is not there to reclaim it) and then being reminded by the blue tiles in a Havana hotel of her childhood tonsil operation. This recollection is mingled with the story of a domestic pig who is about to have its throat

slit by a Cuban family experiencing food shortages during the Special Period. Carmelita concludes that "we are all connected, not through at&t, e-mail, Internet, or the information superhighway, but through memory, history, herstory, horsetory." Her amnesia is gone, and she can "drink two kinds of milk. The sweet condensed milk of Cuba and the pasteurized homo kind from America."[48] But the hybrid identity she develops is shot through with loss and longing, and the unresolved state of the Cuban Revolution and U.S. foreign policy remains. Carmelita's CUMAA makes an important contribution to trauma theory. Like Lisa Kron, Carmelita insists that trauma stories be told in the register of the everyday, and she uses performance and humor to stage the recovery of memory as a process whose results are ultimately fragmented, incomplete, and fictional. Queer performance gives expression to the cultural memory that is otherwise lost to amnesia. The flamboyant Carmelita, as well as Troyano's other drag character, Pingalito Betancourt, a camp version of Cuban masculinity, bear the extravagant marks of Cuban identity that are less visible in Troyano's own more subdued (and hence assimilated) self-presentation. Her use of humor gently mocks psychiatric methods for the recovery of memory and suggests that recovery is not a literal process. Carmelita's recovery of cultural rather than personal memories is a reminder that the trauma that separates her from Cuba is far more extensive than her own history or even the recent history of the Revolution, that it is part of a transnational trauma of long historical duration. There may be no ready cure for this trauma, especially since the recovery of its memory is a collective process. Through stories of pigs and horses, of tonsils and school lunches, Carmelita builds an archive of memory that ruptures the bounded category of the nation and the conceptions of citizenship to which it gives rise. She performs one piece of the transnational American trauma history that is more than five hundred years old and does so in a way that can incorporate queer feelings as an index of this trauma.

Marxism and the Sensations of Everyday Life

Marxism, at least as much as psychoanalysis, which is more usually understood to be the primary point of origin for theories of trauma, is a crucial resource for my understanding of trauma. In "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Walter Benjamin explores how Charles Baudelaire's poetics emerge from the experience of modern urban life as a form of shock. Although he draws on Freud's model (from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) of trauma as the rupture or penetration of the psyche's protective shield (likened to an organism's cortical layer), Benjamin finds shock or a new form of sensational experience to be embedded in such activities as encountering the mass crowds of urban life, working in the factory, or even watching a film, whose editing process mimics the shock of modern life.[49] Benjamin's extraordinary brand of spiritual materialism seeks the logic of capital in the sensory encounter of the critic as flaneur with its material evidence in architectural spaces, commodities, and cultural objects. The aim is to transform the abstract and pervasive power of capitalism into something that can be felt, and shock or trauma becomes the paradigmatic sensation of everyday life under capitalism. For example, Wolfgang Schivelbusch's historical analysis of railway travel, inspired by a Benjaminian materialism, retraces the origins of traumatic neurosis in the medical diagnosis of the effects of the railway accidents that were one of the by-products of industrialization.[50] Traumatic shock becomes a register of the effects of living within industrialized society— a local experience of shock that registers the more diffuse experience of social life.

Although Benjamin's relation to Marxism is often understood to be idiosyncratic, there is a strong link between Karl Marx's own concern with the relation between systemic exploitation and lived experiences of pain, most notably in the case of the worker in the factory, and this ongoing tradition of inquiry into what it feels like to live within the systemic violence of capitalism.[51] In *Capital*, Marx sets out not only to develop a theory of surplus value that can explain where exploitation comes from but to document the nature of labor. He describes the effects of the long working day, cramped and inhumane workplaces, and the monotony of mechanized mass production in graphic terms. As I have argued elsewhere, although Marx insists on the need for a theoretical and conceptual analysis of commodity production, he is also drawn to sensational representation and to capitalism as felt experience.[52]

There is a significant tradition of "sensational" Marxism, one that includes Benjamin and Georg Simmel, and more recently, cultural theorists such as Michael Taussig and Fredric Jameson, who emphasize shock and sensation as markers of shifting economic modes of production because of capitalism's ability to reshape the very structure of everyday experience.[53] Within a Marxist approach to the history of sensation, trauma can be understood as sign or symptom of a broader systemic problem, a moment in which abstract social systems can actually be felt or sensed. But traumatic experience and its aftermath can be characterized not just by too much feeling, or hyperarousal, but also by an absence of feeling, or numbness. Furthermore, the feeling of life under capitalism may manifest as much in the dull drama of everyday life as in cataclysmic or punctual events. When serving as a point of entry into understanding the affective life of social systems, trauma must be seen to inhabit both intense sensation and numbness, both everyday and extreme circumstances.

It is important to pay attention, though, to whose sensory experience is presumed to manifest the zeitgeist. Benjamin's flaneur experiencing the shock of urban life, and even Marx's worker in the factory, represent only some of many social positions that bear the marks of systemic violence. And the archive of this trauma can be an elusive one, not always a matter of sensational self-evidence.

When one takes capitalism as a framework for violence, rather than ostensibly more circumscribed events such as war, or considers slavery within the context of persistent forms of racism, the task of locating such violence may be more difficult because it doesn't always take the form of visible or punctual events.

A Marxism interested in trauma and sensations is certainly consonant with materialist inquiry, but it also intervenes against the abstractions of systemic analysis that can be one of Marxism's characteristic tendencies. Trauma, like Avery Gordon's conception of haunting, is a form of mediation, "which occurs on the terrain situated between our ability to conclusively describe the logic of Capitalism and State Terror, for example, and the various experiences of this logic, experiences that are more than not partial, coded, symptomatic, contradictory, ambiguous."[54] Rather than offering an analysis that uses generalizations about capitalism, racism, or globalization, Gordon instead conjures ghosts who demand not just that something be known but that something be felt and done. Representing ghosts requires a language of graphic and affective specificity, yet because ghosts are both visible and invisible, the local evidence they provide is not just empirical. And what Kathleen Stewart says about "monstrosity stories" could also be claimed of trauma stories: they "fascinate because they dramatize odd moments when latent possibilities materialize without warning and effects hidden from the view of a center in denial suddenly grow tactile."[55] But she warns against simply decoding such moments through ideology critique, "which assumes that by definition things are not what they seem and expressive forms are effects of a deeper and more true and usually diabolical (or at least depressing and constraining) structure."[56]

It is in the spirit of this search for innovative ways of mapping global histories in terms of lived experiences and capturing the disjunctions between the two that I stress the need for sensational stories as an alternative form of knowledge to the abstractions of systemic analysis. This tradition of sensational Marxism more often has an implicit rather than explicit presence in the chapters that follow, but it remains a crucial inspiration for my commitment to recognizing the connections between traumatic experience and broader as well as more amorphous social problems that are not always experienced as such. Like the insidious trauma that feminist theorists track, the affective nature of everyday experiences of systemic violence may only sometimes be manifest as trauma. Moreover, a traumatic event may function as a symptom whose meaning is unclear without contextualization. The mediated relation between trauma and systems of social violence thus requires modes of analysis that don't take trauma at face value. But attention to the sensational and traumatic manifestations of social systems also requires a suspicion of abstractions and generalizations that can obscure the lived specificity of trauma. Indeed, trauma itself can be one such generalization, reducing the felt urgencies of experience to a medicalized diagnosis of symptoms.

I am especially wary of the pathologization of trauma because of its similarity to the pathologization of sexual perversity and sexual identities in the name of constructing normative identities. The shared origins of trauma and sexual identity in discourses of psychoanalysis suggest the links between the two. The history of gay and lesbian identity formations has shown that medical diagnoses have wide-ranging social and political consequences, in addition to their immediate practical effects; a landmark in gay and lesbian history was its removal from classification as a disease by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973. Although it can be argued that sexology produced modern homosexuality as much as it problematically labeled it deviant or perverse, it has been nonetheless important to wrest it from the hands of the doctors and scientists who first "invented" it. The same might ultimately prove true for PTSD, which if overmedicalized, produces a hall of mirrors in which social problems are reduced to diseases in need of ever refined diagnoses. It is necessary to approach medicalization as a strategy whose effects can't be determined in advance. For example, the inclusion of PTSD in the DSM–III in 1980 arguably had the beneficial effect of making medical treatment available for the psychic as well as physical symptoms of combat for Vietnam War veterans. At the same time, however, it was an unpopular war that brought attention to PTSD, and the traumas of the Vietnam War include militarism and U.S. foreign policy not just the experiences of individual soldiers.

The parallels with the history of homosexuality serve as a reminder that even if the PTSD diagnosis has certain strategic merits, it is wise to remain vigilant about the hazards of converting a social problem into a medical one. There is a tendency for medical research to become obsessed with scientifically describing PTSD and its symptoms, including biomedical research on the changes in the brain that would serve as evidence of the damage caused by trauma. Although it can spotlight problems that might otherwise be misrecognized or unrecognized, medical diagnosis too often stops precisely where a more exacting analysis is warranted. I say this with respect for the practical exigencies of working with traumatized groups—Holocaust survivors, war veterans, refugees from violence and political torture, victims of battery and assault—for whom help is urgently needed. Many of the psychiatrists who treat them are well aware of the social and political conditions that turn people into patients. As such, there is room for the insights of cultural and social theory within therapeutic practice. Studies of how homosexual identity is as much created as oppressed in the "repressive"Victorian era can serve as an instructive model for inquiry into the history of constructions of trauma over the last hundred years. The analytic endeavor of historicizing trauma can find inspiration in historicizing work on the combined and related "discoveries," through discourses of psychoanalysis and sexuality, of a wide range of sexual and affective "perversions," of which homosexuality, hysteria, and incest are only a few. Such work has required careful attention to the differences among sexual identities, acts, and behaviors.

There are further resources that queer theory and gay and lesbian studies can offer to trauma studies. Whether overtly or not, many of the key texts and critics in the field of queer theory have made use of the category of trauma in mounting critiques of normativity. Judith Butler's notion of gender identification as located in melancholic repudiation of the other gender along with her account of abjection's role in the formation of both individual and collective identity places trauma at the origins of subject formation.[57] Even though Butler doesn't name it as such, the normalization of sex and gender identities can be seen as a form of insidious trauma, which is effective precisely because it often leaves no sign of a problem. Queer theorists such as Leo Bersani and Michael Warner also

embrace the antinormative dimensions of sexual perversities and queer cultural formations, although whereas Warner proposes a politics grounded in antinormativity, Bersani sees it as the undoing of politics in part because of his commitment to a conception of sexuality as fundamentally traumatic and hence anticommunal.[58] Furthermore, when Biddy Martin critiques the antinormativity of queer theory on the grounds that the embrace of the perverse leaves no room for ordinary lives, she invokes both trauma and affect. Martin uses the traumatic narrative of her brother's death to describe the possibilities of embracing "attachment, investment, and even love" as the foundation for queer social formations. As she puts it, "Part of the critique of totalizing views requires that we also keep alive not only transgressive desires but also emotional attachments, pleasures, fascinations, and curiosities that do not necessarily reproduce, reflect, or line up neatly with political ideologies or oppositional movements."[59] Trauma thus stands on both sides of a debate about queer theory's critique of normativity. For Bersani, sexuality's traumatic dimensions and the scene of gay male cruising prevent any pastoral vision of sexual liberation. For Martin, the hardwon forms of love and attachment that emerge from the trauma of her brother's death as well as from her family's ways of excluding their lesbian daughter unsettle the "self-evidence of supposedly normal families" (Martin 14). Despite their considerable differences, Bersani and Martin share the conviction that the unpredictability and contingency of affective life trouble any systematic presumptions about identity and politics, including models of political liberation that depend on the repudiation of the normal or the embrace of it. An important agenda for queer studies, then, is an inquiry into the nuances and idiosyncrasies of how people actually live their sexual and emotional lives.

Thinking about trauma from the same depathologizing perspective that has animated queer understandings of sexuality opens up possibilities for understanding traumatic feelings not as a medical problem in search of a cure but as felt experiences that can be mobilized in a range of directions, including the construction of cultures and publics. Queer theory offers a resource for thinking about affect, emotion, and feeling; indeed, in investigating sexuality, it is also often investigating affect, capturing the sensibilities and desires that circulate in the vicinity of sexual acts, practices, and cultures. For example, Eve Sedgwick links sexuality and emotion in using the category of shame to suggest that traumatic experiences of rejection and humiliation are connected to identity formations that are more than just reaction formations.[60] As Sedgwick and others have noted, the reclamation of shame constitutes an alternative to the model of gay pride, carving out new possibilities for claiming queer, gay, and lesbian identities that don't involve a repudiation of the affects brought into being by homophobia.[61]

Catalyzed in part by the AIDS crisis, queer scholars have also investigated the nexus of mourning and melancholy.[62] Observations about how mourning is different for queers, as well as reconsiderations of melancholy as a form of mourning that should not be pathologized, have produced understandings of collective affective formations that break through the presumptively privatized nature of affective experience. Especially valuable in this respect has been work by José Muñoz and David Eng, which is also inflected by an interest in how affective experience differs according to race and ethnicity.[63] Muñoz writes about melancholy in works by African American gay men as a "depathologized structure of feeling," suggesting that the ambivalences of disidentification, far from disabling cultural production, are a rich resource. His use of Raymond Williams confirms the resources of Marxism for tracking the intersections of affective experience and social and cultural formations. In these projects, affect is a way of charting cultural contexts that might otherwise remain ephemeral because they haven't solidified into a visible public culture.[64] Affects that serve as an

index of how social life is felt become the raw material for cultural formations that are unpredictable and varied.

Trauma, then, serves as a site for exploring the convergence of affect and sexuality as categories of analysis for queer theory.[65] In the course of looking at sexual trauma, I often cast a wide net by considering trauma as a category that embraces a range of affects, including not just loss and mourning but also anger, shame, humor, sentimentality, and more. I do not presume in advance a particular affective experience associated with trauma, but open up a way to examine historical and social experience in affective terms. Queer approaches to trauma can appreciate the creative ways in which people respond to it. Moreover, queer theory and trauma theory are fellow travelers because they seek ways to build not just sexuality but emotional and personal life into models of political life and its transformation.

2 Trauma and Touch: Butch-Femme Sexualities

We may, I think, tentatively venture to regard the common traumatic neurosis as a consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli.—Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

Nobody wants to be made to feel the turtle with its underside all exposed, just pink and folded flesh. . . . In the effort not to feel fucked, I became the fucker, even with women. In the effort not to feel pain or desire, I grew a callous around my heart and imagined I felt nothing at all.—Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*

Discussing the uses of medieval culture for contemporary queer theory, Carolyn Dinshaw proposes that histories can "touch" one another. There are resonant juxtapositions between past and present whose explanatory power is not causal or teleological; instead, the affective charge of investment, of being "touched," brings the past forward into the present. In this chapter, butch-femme discourses about sexuality touch theories of trauma, and specifically Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud's description of trauma as the breach or penetration of a protective shield resonates alongside Moraga's image of the turtle with the exposed underbelly beneath its hard shell—an image she uses to explain why a butch Chicana dyke would not want to expose herself to the vulnerability of penetration. Dinshaw's use of touch to describe the unexpected or contingent connections between texts is all the more appropriate to these passages because they are actually about touch, considering the possibility that touch can be so affecting as to be traumatic. For Dinshaw, "the process of touching, of making partial connections between incommensurate entities" is "queerly historical because it creates a relation across time that has an affective and an erotic component." [1] Her queer historical method is an apt description of this chapter's project, which is to sexualize and to queer definitions of trauma by putting them in contact with writings about butch-femme sexuality, a body of material that, while it does not always address trauma explicitly, has much to say about touching and being touched.

Operating at the hinge point between the physical and psychic, representations of trauma as a wound or shock to the self often depict the psyche as a body or material entity that has experienced the violence of penetration. Although Freud and others in the psychoanalytic tradition are noted for having turned trauma into a psychological category, images of the body continue to circulate in discourses of trauma, as evident, for one, in Freud's representation of the penetration of the "protective shield" as an image of traumatic shock. The origins of trauma discourse in the ambiguities of railway shock, which left doctors uncertain about whether to imagine the nervous system as a physical body affected by a violent shock or as a psychic entity whose damage could be immaterial,

continue to pervade its representation.[2] Walter Benjamin picks up on Freud's image of the protective shield when he describes the experience of modernity as one of shock. Baudelaire, who for Benjamin exemplifies the flaneur exposed to the crush of the metropolitan crowd, "made it his business to parry the shocks, no matter where they might come from, with his spiritual and his physical self. This shock defense is depicted graphically in an attitude of combat."[3] The violation of bodily boundaries need not be a literal moment of penetration, but it is experienced as equivalent to invasive physical contact because it is so emphatically a visceral or sensational experience—in other words, an experience of being touched. In a quite different and more contemporary context, psychiatrists such as Bessel van der Kolk exploring PTSD have returned to somatic understandings of trauma, using brain scans to look for its biochemical and physical effects.

Within the context of sexuality, penetration can of course be associated with pleasure, but as a sexual act, it is often also constructed as violent, if not traumatic. Trauma is present in the association of penetration with domination, the assumption that anal penetration constitutes not only emasculation but annihilation of the self, and the construction of rape as sexualized power. Such representations of penetration lend themselves to constructions of sexuality as fundamentally traumatic. A particularly prominent example, to be explored in more detail later, is Leo Bersani's understanding of sexuality as self-shattering.[4] Bersani's theories of sexuality and trauma carry a "touch of the queer," to use Dinshaw's phrase (Dinshaw 151), formulated with gay male sexualities and anal penetration as points of reference, and thus inspire my own efforts to queer trauma discourse.

In drawing on images of penetration, discourses of both trauma and sexuality invoke the powerful fears of vulnerability that being affected by sensations or being touched can arouse. Like trauma, touch is a term that has both physical and emotional, both material and immaterial, connotations. To be emotionally touched, like being traumatized, is to be affected in a way that *feels* physical even if it is also a psychic state. This chapter situates penetration within the context of the more general category of touch in order to capture how, as a breach of bodily boundaries, it creates a continuum between the physical and psychic, between the sexual and emotional. The imbrications of trauma and touch are a reminder of how modes of everyday sense experience, and particularly the intimacies of tactile experience in which bodies and things rub up against one another, are connected to trauma as a somatic experience.

I propose the value of reading trauma theory alongside another important repository of thinking about penetration and touch—lesbian writings on butch-femme. In the last decade, there has been a flood of literature on butch-femme that includes historical work on pre-Stonewall bar culture, such as Joan Nestle's collection *The Persistent Desire* as well as Madeline Davis and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy's *Boots of Leather*, *Slippers of Gold*, and documentation of contemporary butch-femme formations. [5] Butch-femme identities and cultures have also served as a resource for queer theory's understanding of gender and sexuality, and butch-femme writings constitute a valuable archive of explicit representations of not only sexuality and desire but also emotion.[6] Queer theory meets trauma theory in butch-femme's unpredictable relations between gender, sexual, and bodily presentations. Just as the connections between genders and bodies are both material and constructed, so too are those between trauma and touch. It is possible to ask how penetration comes to mean domination or trauma without presuming that these are natural connections, and how it can materialize not just gendered and sexualized forms of power but hierarchies of race and nation as well. Butch-femme discourses reveal possibilities for remaking these linkages within the intimate sphere of sexual and romantic relationships, and also within the sexual publics that emerge from them, including the

physical spaces of bar and performance cultures as well as the literary publics produced by butch-femme writing on sexuality. Butch-femme expands the vocabulary of sexuality, which remains impoverished by presumptions that penetration means only penis in vagina or domination. Its visceral and emotional qualities transform theory's abstractions, bringing into being new possibilities for bodies and their meanings, which have implications not only for queer sexual lives but for others, too.[7]

Even when butch-femme discourse doesn't explicitly mention trauma, its concern with the physical and emotional meanings of touch resonates with trauma theory. The receptivity of femmes, their openness to the "trauma" of penetration and touch, and the phenomenon of butch untouchability, a resistance to touch that can be both sexual and emotional, together suggest the surprising relevance of lesbian public cultures to discussions of trauma.[8] In forging creative responses to the trauma of touch, butch-femme discourses of sexuality depathologize the relation between trauma and sexuality, but they don't necessarily refuse it. Butch-femme writings queer trauma theory by troubling the ease with which negative assumptions about penetration ground a similarly negative sense of trauma that seems to go without saying.

Freud's Protective Shield

First published in 1920, Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is especially important to trauma theory for its origins in the experience of World War I shell shock, its meditations on the problem of traumatic repetition, which seems indistinguishably to constitute both resistance to cure and a form of cure, and its positing of the ominous concept of the death drive. It also provides exemplary instances of Freud's penchant for the metapsychological "speculation, often far-fetched speculation," that makes his work suspect to some readers and fascinating to others.[9] In one of those flights of rhetorical fancy, Freud invites his reader to "picture," as a model for consciousness, "a living organism in its most simplified possible form as an undifferentiated vesicle of a substance that is susceptible to stimulation" (20). Even though Freud is ostensibly producing an abstract model of sense perception by invoking an organism that doesn't have a differentiated body or sensations, and hence nothing so specific as genitals or sexual excitement, his account is filled with emotional drama. Elaborating on how the organism protects itself from overstimulation, Freud creates a melodramatic scenario of embattlement and self-sacrifice:

> *This little fragment of living substance is suspended in the middle of an external world charged with the most powerful energies; and it would be killed by the stimulation emanating from these if it were not provided with a protective shield against stimuli. It acquires the shield in this way: its outermost surface ceases to have the structure proper to living matter, becomes to some degree inorganic and thenceforward functions as a special envelope or membrane resistant to stimuli. . . . By its death, the outer layer has saved all the deeper ones from a similar fate—unless, that is to say, stimuli reach it which are so strong that they break through the protective shield. (21)*

Freud uses this image to present the penetration of a physical barrier or boundary as a model for trauma: "We describe as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli" (23). Even this simple model of penetration is freighted with symbolic meaning as a painful experience, one that has not just physical but psychic dimensions. Not only is the breaching of boundaries a shock; the aftermath, in which the organism creates a defensive crust or shield through the death of its outer layers, is also a disturbingly literal image of what it means to be toughened or hardened by experience.

In Freud's model of perception as penetration, all forms of sensation carry with them the trace of trauma. Every organism or body is by definition "sensitive," requiring some form of protection from the incursions of the outside world. Stimulation of any kind is so threatening to the organism that it can kill it, and it wards off this danger when the surface of the organism submits to death so that the rest of it may live. The organism is most comfortable when the overstimulated, and then dead or numb, cortical shield prevents it from having any feelings at all. Present in these passages is one of the persistent conundrums of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, generated by Freud's adherence to the principle of constancy and the hydraulic models presented in his early work, "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (1895). According to Freud, "The mental apparatus endeavours to keep the quantity of excitation present in it as low as possible or at least to keep it constant."[10] Sensation is thus actually unpleasant, and if the pleasure principle holds true, then its impact must be minimized through discharge or the defensive capacities of the cortical shield. Sensation and numbness are both marked by paradox; sensation simultaneously connects the organism to the outside world and kills it, and

numbness is the effect of, as well as the protection against, the traumatic breaching of the organism's boundaries. Contemporary psychiatric definitions of PTSD symptoms continue to register this paradox in their combined emphasis on numbing and hyperstimulation as two forms of traumatic response.[11]

Freud's model of trauma as a breach of the organism's protective shield grows more complicated when he introduces the idea that in addition to fending off stimulation from external sources, the organism must also contend with stimulation that is internally produced. The cortical shield is of no use in protecting against this internal stimulation, and Freud concludes that once again his speculations about the pleasure principle lead fatally to the need to posit the death drive. (One of the reasons the argument, despite its abstractions, seems so emotionally charged is that it reproduces in its structure the work of the death drive, which constantly returns as a necessary concept the more Freud resists it.) In another of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*'s affectively powerful images, Freud describes how the instinct to restore things to an earlier state or maintain a state of inertia means that "the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion. Thus, these guardians of life [what appear to be instincts for self-preservation], too, were originally the myrmidons of death" (33). As some of Freud's poststructuralist readers have noted, the death drive is not so much a singular entity as the deconstruction of, or the impossibility of consistently positing, the pleasure principle.[12] While there is, of course, no reason to believe Freud's assumption about internal stimulation— it is pure speculation or positing—its implications remain central: trauma's causes are both internal and external, psychic and social, biological and cultural, and often indistinguishably so.

Freud's work remains unexpectedly prominent within contemporary psychological theories of trauma such as PTSD, and the debate about trauma as somatic or psychic continues to be lively. As Cathy Caruth has observed, psychoanalytic and psychiatric approaches are not mutually exclusive in trauma studies, which constitutes a place of dialogue between them.[13] Although deference to Freud can sometimes take the form of ahistorical, universalizing descriptions of trauma when the similarity between Freud's ideas and contemporary definitions of PTSD is taken to prove that PTSD has always existed and exhibits the same symptoms everywhere, it also gives the scientific research a richness and lack of orthodoxy. For example, noted PTSD expert John Wilson cites *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as an early account of hyperarousal and numbing, two of the clinically accepted symptoms of trauma.[14] Freud's biological model of the cortical shield is remarkably compatible with current efforts, most notably by Bessel van der Kolk, to research the effects of trauma on the brain. Even while searching for the physiological effects of trauma, though, van der Kolk is also sensitive to its cultural, sociological, and political dimensions, and his interest in somatic therapies (including rapid eye movement work) rather than traditional talk therapy takes him into a range of alternative methods rather than just laboratory research with brain scans and chemicals. Like Freud in his earliest work with Josef Breuer on hysteria, van der Kolk insists that "the body keeps the score," recording traumatic memories in ways that must be activated or addressed by somatic therapies.[15] Contemporary trauma research seems to have come full circle to its mid-nineteenth-century origins in the diagnosis of railway shock; the body has returned as the site where trauma can be both manifested and cured. More than owing its significance to the distinction between the psychic and the physical, trauma discourse has consistently been the locus of debate about the uncertain distinction between them.

I have always been mysteriously moved by Freud's image of the simple amoebalike organism having been "so thoroughly baked through by stimulation" that it has developed a "crust" (*Pleasure Principle*, 20). The beleaguered organism returns to me as I read butch-femme writings about sexual

penetration and emotional vulnerability from the vantage point of both receptive femmes and untouchable butches (who might be said to possess a version of Freud's numb or toughened cortical shield). If in Freud's discourse of trauma the image of penetration along with the violation of bodily and psychic integrity through touch and sensation are so central, then it seems worth asking how the categories of penetration and touch are constructed and whether they might be subject to variation. I find the butch-femme writings valuable precisely because they depathologize the traumatic nature of penetration and being touched, while also acknowledging it, and therefore suggest a different approach to trauma.

Another important and related link between Freud's trauma discourse and butch-femme discourse is that both are concerned with the interplay between the physical and the psychic. The same representation of the psychic in physical terms that so marks Freud's writing is pervasive in butch-femme discussions of sexuality, which understand the physical dynamics of sexuality to be a materialization of emotional and social processes. They suggest that making penetration meaningful is not a mistaken displacement of psychic and social processes onto the material body but a significant vehicle for working through traumatic histories. Without being essentializing, they use the body as a ground for negotiating social relations, finding, for instance, within the sexual intimacy of the couple practices that address experiences of homophobia, shame, and abjection in the public world.

Freud's reading of trauma as the breach of boundaries makes it possible to read butch-femme accounts of penetration and touch as a theory of trauma. Some readers, though, may find that this move from Freud's discussion of trauma to everyday sexual intimacy results in too loose an application of the term trauma. These experiences are not necessarily traumatic in the more conventional sense of the term but are traumatic in the specific sense of a breach of bodily boundaries imagined by Freud. By remaining quite faithful to Freud's conception of trauma as breach, my use of trauma to describe touch and penetration excavates the assumptions about trauma that pervade everyday experiences of embodiment and sexual intimacy. I would argue that these assumptions continue to circulate in cases of more overt trauma.

Recasting Femme Receptivity

Many self-identified femmes challenge the idea that being penetrated or sexually touched is a negative experience, or "traumatic" in Freud's sense, by testifying to their active and eager desire to be fucked. Madeline Davis refers to "that hunger, that desperate need, that desire to be 'fucked senseless' and to know that we have, do, and would put up with some incredible shit to get it."[16] Amber Hollibaugh describes the femme's self-definition in terms of an ability to name and take her pleasure: "But I want to come and I want certain things to happen. I am real defined by how I want to be fucked."[17] In an essay on femme stigma, Lyndall MacCowan characterizes getting fucked as a "loss of control" that is enabled by a butch lover's willingness to read and respond to her desire:

> *It is butch women who made wanting sex okay, who never said I wanted it "too much" or thought I got too wet. With so many other women I was either "an ironing board" or "a slut"; it was butch women who taught me about multiple orgasms and the incredible high of fisting, who made it okay to want to be made love to until I was too spent to move. It was butch women who made it right to give by responding rather than reciprocating, to make love by moving beneath them instead of using my tongue or hands. It was butch women who gave me permission to not be in control at all times, and butch women who didn't think it vain that I wanted to be pretty, who, indeed, made me feel beautiful.*[18]

MacCowan characterizes getting fucked and losing control as a hard-won privilege, made possible by butch women who are willing to give her the luxury of "responding" rather than having to use her "tongue or hands" to engage with them more overtly. She articulates the stigma against expressing the desire to be fucked that has to be overcome by the persistent attention of her butch lovers. For all these women, femme sexuality is about voracious desire for which no apologies are necessary because it can be accepted and fulfilled by another's attentions.

Central to femme discourse about being the recipient of a lover's sexual attention is the recurrent need to counter the notion that this position is a passive one—an assumption that also pervades the image of trauma as a violent breach of bodily boundaries. Joan Nestle and other self-identified femmes insist that the femme is active rather than passive in her sexual relation to her lover and her own desire. Moving beneath her lover's body, for example, MacCowan redefines responsiveness as a physical *activity*, and hence not as the state of physical passivity that enables "getting fucked" to serve as a metaphor for weakness, powerlessness, and submissiveness, all of which are associations that link penetration and trauma. Many femmes stress the power and labor of receptivity, a term that replaces "passivity" so as to make the role of "bottom" less stigmatized. In an essay whose title, "Butchy Femme," itself indicates a redefinition of femme power, Mykel Johnson makes this discursive and conceptual move:

> *My femme eroticism was not passivity but receptivity. Being good in bed as a femme meant communicating my responses. Moaning, talking, breathing, shifting, letting her know the effect her lovemaking had on me, letting her know what I wanted. To be femme with her meant to be vulnerable, to open to her the thoughts and feelings of my imagination, to let her know the inner recesses of my mind as well as my body.*[19]

Johnson characterizes the femme's receptivity as active, as she gives her lover physical signals of the effects of her lovemaking. "Communicating [her] responses" is work, as is allowing herself to be "vulnerable" enough to enable her lover to "know" her. The text hints that making oneself "open" is a

physical process of, for example, allowing oneself to be penetrated, but "the inner recesses" of not just her body but her mind are made available to her lover. Constructed as "openness," vulnerability as an emotional state is connected to the body; moreover, vulnerability in these writings takes on positive meaning as a desirable and often difficult achievement. Far from being passively taken, Johnson must actively engage with and return her lover's attentions, and in return for the work of letting her lover know what she wants, she gets what she wants. If making one's desires known requires effort, the value of a butch lover who can read those desires is considerable.

In addition to casting the power to receive sexual pleasure as desirable, Johnson indicates that it is a difficult, and thus precious, power to obtain, further challenging constructions of being fucked as negative or linked to trauma. Like MacCowan, she describes her appreciation of the attention she receives from her butch lovers, who allow her to forget her concerns about taking too long to come or demanding too much from them. "What had been a liability was transformed in her eyes into an asset."[20] This kind of fear of getting fucked is rather different from that frequently associated with acts of penetration, where the bottom is constructed as humiliated by or used for the pleasure of the person doing the fucking or penetrating. If femme (or butch) lesbians have problems with being made love to, being taken advantage of is not necessarily one of them. If anything is traumatic, it is lack of sexual attention; getting fucked serves as an antidote to fears that one's sexual desires are perverse or inappropriate.

Hollibaugh is right when she says, "It's hard to talk about things like giving up power without it sounding passive."[21] So impoverished is the language of sexual power, especially the *loss* of sexual power, that it can only be translated into an active/passive dichotomy, where passivity is always stigmatized. Furthermore, this association of giving up power with passivity inhabits understandings of trauma as a bodily violation that threatens the integrity of the self. In a dialogue with Cherríe Moraga, "What We're Rollin' around in Bed With," a crucial contribution to the 1980s sex debates, Hollibaugh articulates a notion of femme sexuality that echoes Johnson's and MacCowan's insistence on the pleasures of making oneself open to a lover and on the agency involved in the process of being desired:

> *I am willing to give myself over to a woman equal to her amount of wanting. I expose myself for her to appreciate. I open myself out for her to see what's possible for her to love in me that's female. I want her to respond to it. I may not be doing something active with my body, but more eroticizing her need that I feel in her hands as she touches me.*[22]

Like the butch who focuses on her partner's pleasure, the femme emphasizes the way in which her pleasure emerges in response to her partner's desire. Hollibaugh suggests that she need not be physically active to be responsive, that she acts by "eroticizing" the "need" that is manifest in her lover's touch. Her writing creates a vocabulary for describing how allowing oneself to be touched is an action.

The discourse of femmes undoes assumptions about any simple relation or analogy between binarisms such as "butch/femme," "top/ bottom," "fucking/being fucked," and "penetrating/being penetrated," and makes it difficult to reduce them to any single master binarism, such as "masculine/feminine" or "active/passive."[23] It also transforms the obviousness of any associations between trauma and penetration. Different kinds of penetration *mean* different things, a complexity sometimes effaced in a phallocentric culture that assumes that only penises do the penetrating, that only vaginas are meant to be penetrated (thus, for example, rendering the anus/asshole a suspect orifice), or that if being penetrated is traumatic, the trauma is negative. Lesbian sexuality requires a

language for penetration with dildos, fingers, or fists, and it faces the challenge of expanding the erotics of penetrating objects or body parts, which is too often limited to a focus on penises or phallic substitutes.[24] By the same token, an erotics of how different orifices—such as anuses, vaginas, and mouths—get fucked would be useful in order to reveal the wide range of ways that getting penetrated is experienced, both physically and symbolically. It would then be impossible to appeal to some biological common ground to explain the meaning of penetration, but even more important, new social and sexual imaginaries could be enabled. New understandings of penetration and sexuality can make a crucial intervention into trauma studies particularly in redefining the experience of emotional vulnerability.

Penetration and Male Homosexuality

The penetration of the anus is perhaps even more culturally freighted as a signifier of power than the penetration of the vagina; one indication of its cultural power is the frequency and virulence with which anal penetration and male homosexuality have been mutually defining. In addition to providing accounts of forms of sexuality ignored and repudiated by heterocentric theory and history, recent studies of homosexual relations between men have dramatically demonstrated the constructed nature of sexuality and shown how social hierarchies are propped on (in the Freudian sense of anaclisis) the physical configurations of intercourse. David Halperin's research on Greek sexuality, as well as Tomás Almaguer's work on male homosexuality in Chicano and Latino cultures, have the enormously powerful effect of unhinging penetration and heterosexuality in order to illuminate better the complex relations between sexual acts and sexual, gender, and social identities.[25] Although different in many respects, in each of the cultures that Halperin and Almaguer describe, a link between penetration and domination remains intact—a construction facilitated by a gendered binary in which the penetrator is cast as masculine and the person being penetrated is cast as feminine, or in which one is active and the other is passive. It is peculiar that scholarship designed to suggest the variability of the social meanings attached to sexual acts should have the unintentional effect of leaving the impression that penetration signifies domination and feminization, if not universally, then remarkably extensively. While it might be going too far to read a homophobic fear of anal penetration into Freud's construction of trauma (even though it would certainly be a reading in the spirit of psychoanalysis), a queer perspective on the simultaneous contingency and pervasiveness of assumptions that a particular sexual act, anal penetration, has a fixed social meaning offers a useful critical framework for considering the possible (un)naturalness of links between penetration and trauma.

Freud's ideas about trauma and sexuality are spectacularly juxtaposed with gay male cruising and anal sex in the queer virtuosity of Leo Bersani's "Is the Rectum a Grave?" an essay I have always been drawn to for inspiration about the attractions of receptivity. In a "perverse" way, Bersani's essay is a celebration of anal receptivity, and, even more importantly, a celebration of the psychic experience of "self-shattering" that being fucked enables. "Perverse" because Bersani's professed desire to argue for the value of "powerlessness" is intended as a theoretical challenge to what he dubs "pastoral and redemptive" sex-positive theories. In its most colloquial form, Bersani's underlying premise is that "most people don't like [sex]," and that its value lies in its "anticommunal, antiegalitarian, antinurturing, antiloving" aspects.[26] Bersani recommends getting fucked for its capacity to produce "self-shattering," which is not strictly reducible to the physical experience of being penetrated but is a more profoundly psychic experience.[27]

Bersani's claims are significantly grounded in psychoanalytic theory, including Freud's discussion of the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Drawing on Freud, Bersani understands sexuality to be fundamentally masochistic, and trauma, in the sense of a disintegration of the self, is one of the organizing principles of a sexuality governed by the death drive. He defends the sexual experience of self-shattering in order to challenge universalizing and naturalizing assumptions about the "innate" positivity of sex, but he also seems to posit his own form of sexual essentialism. In its former, more modest form, Bersani's assertion is strategically useful for, and compatible with, theories of lesbian sexuality that try to contest the idea that any sexual relation marked by power is problematic. He attempts to confront the conceptual dilemma of theories that ultimately romanticize sex or view it as utopian in order to declare that forms of sexuality that involve submission or vulnerability can be pleasurable. According to Bersani, these conceptual frameworks beg the

question of unpleasure by reinscribing it within the economy of the pleasure principle. Seeking to avoid this charge, he qualifies his advocacy for the "strong appeal of powerlessness, of the loss of control" by adding, "I don't mean the value of gentleness, or nonaggressiveness, or even of passivity, but rather of a more radical disintegration and humiliation of the self."[28] In order to sustain his argument against sex positivity, Bersani must preserve the traumatic dimensions of getting fucked (traumatic in the sense of the violation of the body constituting a violation of the self). The specter of the grave can never leave the rectum because of the work of the death drive.[29]

Bersani's essay is useful here insofar as he forges a queer connection between Freudian theory and gay male sexual practices. The gay male cruising scene that is his point of departure, however, is only one of the many queer sexual practices and publics that are relevant to a reading of the relations between penetration, sexuality, and trauma. A fuller account of sexual experiences of powerlessness, to which femme discussions of getting fucked have a great deal to contribute, can offer different versions of the link between trauma and sexuality than Bersani's. Femme lesbians also value "loss of control," and they don't prettify powerlessness as Bersani claims sex-positive celebrations of S/M by theorists such as Gayle Rubin and Pat Califia do. It's hard to say whether femmes describe "radical disintegration" and "humiliation of the self," especially since those two states are not necessarily the same; I wonder, though, if Bersani's use of those phrases emerges in the context of how a specifically *masculine* self is humiliated, and hence threatened with disintegration, by anal penetration. But even if radical disintegration and humiliation don't adequately characterize the negative affects that both butch and femme lesbians associate with being fucked, that doesn't mean their accounts romanticize it either. Lesbians, for example, describe a rather different fear—not the fear that comes with getting fucked but the fear that *prevents* one from getting fucked. Moreover, Bersani's counterintuitive premise that people don't like to have sex is less startling in the case of women, for whom the dangers and discomforts of sexuality (whether pregnancy, rape, or an inability to attend to their own pleasure) have been all too readily apparent. Bersani's contention that men not only want to be penetrated but want to "get fucked" may constitute a more powerful claim for its attractions than saying that (straight) women want to get fucked, which can more easily be attributed to prescribed gender roles. Yet the fact that men like to get fucked only seems counterintuitive (or "queer") if it is assumed that everyone really wants to be "masculine" and on top or that the trauma of penetration must necessarily be negative.[30]

Giving and Taking: Femme Receptivity

Read in the context of Bersani's critique of sex positivity, I would argue that femme accounts of receptivity avoid a redemptive reading of sex, insisting on the fear, pain, and difficulty that can block the way to and be conjured up by making oneself physically and emotionally vulnerable or receptive. Furthermore, the negative affects attached to particular acts cannot be attributed to problems to be resolved by "better" sex, such as nonhierarchical sex, sex without penetration, sex in a culture without homophobia, or any number of other utopian solutions to eliminate "perversion" or pain. An ongoing problem with lesbian/feminist critiques of butch-femme sexuality, which has been addressed by revisionist attention to the pre-Stonewall period, has been the assumption that the supposedly perverse or dysfunctional aspects of earlier cultures can and should be resolved by overcoming internalized homophobia or sexism.[31] What's required instead is a sex positivity that can embrace negativity, including trauma.[32] Allowing a place for trauma within sexuality is consistent with efforts to keep sexuality queer, to maintain a place for shame and perversion within public discourses of sexuality rather than purging them of their messiness in order to make them acceptable.

The painful and difficult aspects of femme sexuality, which are also some of its most powerful qualities, are explored in Joan Nestle's essay "The Gift of Taking." At least as vivid as the language of "fucking/being fucked," "top/bottom," and "penetrating/being penetrated" is Nestle's use of "giving" and "taking." She is most immediately describing the process of being penetrated digitally:

> *She takes me into her hand, pushing, squeezing, opening. She slips one finger into me. I gasp at how she fills me with that one thrust when I have taken so much and will again, but still the first entry has all the joy, the surprise of her power. . . . I can match her demanding with my giving, her hand with my insides. . . . She is a total force over me, and yet all her power is giving me myself.*[33]

While her lover "takes" her by slipping a finger inside of her, Nestle describes herself as also "taking" her lover's hand inside of her. Taking is thus used to mean both receptivity to and possession of another. In addition, as butch and femme each take, they give as well. Nestle's lover is giving attention, a body part, and a demand, but she herself is also giving back, as her "insides" respond to her lover's hand. The femme thus both gives and takes in a process of being penetrated that allows her to "match her [lover's] demanding with my giving, her hand with my insides." In this act of simultaneous giving and taking, Nestle claims that the butch's "power" to take gives "me myself," quite a different conception of power (and exchange) from that implied by the construction of being penetrated as an act that destroys selfhood. The butch top definitely has power over Nestle, though; she is not simply servicing Nestle's femme desires in a way that makes Nestle the top. As bottom, Nestle experiences her own forms of power and pleasure. Ultimately, the exchange of power seems more important than the actual physical acts. Although Nestle seems to be describing digital penetration, what is more important than the actual body parts is the "appropriation of the human body" (to use David Halperin's phrase) to signify the intersubjective dynamics of giving and taking.[34] Given the complex interdependence of the physical and psychic, a more explicit naming of the body would not help to represent the sexual act more accurately.

Crucial to Nestle's account of the pleasures of being taken is her depiction of the difficult aspects of being taken or fucked by her lover. As Nestle's lover enters her body, "the pain is sweet; it destroys the years of numbness" ("Gift," 128). Feeling is contrasted with numbness; even pain is preferable to no feeling at all. Nestle's formulation here resembles Freud's imagery of numbness and sensation. The femme who allows herself to be vulnerable removes the layer of toughness or the

cortical shield that she might carry in the face of a homophobic culture that declares her desires to be shameful or does not recognize the beauty of her queer femininity. Her lover's attention destroys the numbness created by an inability to express desire. Submission to the demands of her lover's touch involves a difficult admission of Nestle's own desire: "I want to scream out to her, 'Now, please take me now,' but I can't, even in this dream. . . . I want to. I need to. For so many years I have not screamed, for so many years the world was not safe enough, or there was no one there to hear it" (129).

Nestle's essay highlights the context within which sexual experience takes place—an often homophobic and variously deadening culture that threatens to destroy the self that is precariously brought into being through sexual activity. The pleasure of being fucked, but also its difficulty, compensates for the self-erasure and "self-hatred" that are otherwise all too pervasive. As Nestle explains,

> *I know this woman, my friend, will bring my body to light, will make me use it and hear it, will strain it to its fullest, and she will help me through her demands and her pleasure to forget self-hatred. Through her gift of taking, I will be given back to myself, a self that must live in this body and thus desperately needs reconciliation. (128)*

Through the gift of taking, Nestle is able to live with her body, which comes to represent herself. More important than the actual physical acts, but inseparable from them, are the psychic effects of receiving attention. Nestle's language of giving and taking need not be translated into more explicit or graphic terms because the body is already a metaphor for psychic and social states. She constructs penetration, however, as a metaphor that signifies not domination but something else. Yet in celebrating the process of getting fucked, Nestle does not deny that a kind of taking is going on as she gives over power to her lover. The resistance, pain, and vulnerability that Nestle articulates suggest that receptivity is a difficult experience, and that it can sometimes be connected to, or a way of accessing, trauma. Her affirmation of sexuality, and more specifically receptivity and femme sexualities, does not exclude fear or emotional pain. She acknowledges the pleasures of power and powerlessness and makes no attempt to disavow the hierarchy that structures the giving and taking of pleasure. Nestle provides a language of sexuality, and of fucking and being fucked, that is dramatically different from the model of penetration as trauma that makes getting fucked a process of submission to the other.

What's especially significant about Nestle's work and other writings about butch-femme is that they make the intimacies of sexuality available for a public culture. Nestle's collection *The Persistent Desire* and the outpouring of writings about butch-femme in the last decade have been essential in making newly visible how the sexual cultures of the pre-Stonewall decades forged new public cultures. There is a model here for the ways in which traumatic experience, especially sexualized trauma, can be brought into the public sphere. In writing about being fucked, femmes are not afraid to talk about trauma because they can find ways of doing so that are depathologizing. They also negotiate the traumas of the social world within sexual relations that are complex economies of embodiment and sociality. Sexual practice serves as a vehicle through which trauma can be articulated and reworked, often in somatic ways, and writing about it makes those practices public.

When Butches Cry: Untouchability and Vulnerability

Femmes reframe a conception of the violation of bodily boundaries as traumatic by suggesting that opening the body and, by extension, the self to the experience of being vulnerable is both welcome and difficult, and hence profoundly transformative. Nevertheless, their insights do not mean that fears of vulnerability should be stigmatized—a point that is made abundantly clear by accounts of butch sexuality. In particular, representations of butch untouchability, a category that is significantly emotional as well as sexual, offer an important perspective on what it means to refuse or resist touch and penetration. The emphasis in discussions of trauma on turning numb or not feeling at all, such as Freud's image of the organism warding off sensation through the toughening of the cortical shield, are vividly taken up in butch sexual and emotional styles, which include performances of feeling in which not showing feeling does not mean that one does not have feelings. The emphasis within butchfemme discourse on not stigmatizing or pathologizing untouchability is suggestive for understanding responses to trauma.

Madeline Davis and Liz Kennedy's interviews with members of Buffalo, New York's lesbian bar community reveal that in the 1940s and 1950s, a butch's public reputation often depended on her untouchability, and her honor was threatened if she was known to have been "flipped" or fucked.[35] Untouchability has been a vexed area of debate about butches— a quality often stigmatized as a sign of pathology, rigidity, and (bad) male identification. Judith Halberstam challenges such views by noting the distinctiveness of stone butch sexuality as a form of sexual desire that is expressed in terms of limits or as an articulation of what one does not want or will not do sexually. She further suggests that a refusal to be penetrated or touched in particular ways does not mean that butch lesbians do not experience sexual pleasure, including orgasm.[36]

Untouchability suggests the wide range of meanings of touch. Halberstam, for example, disarticulates genital contact from other forms of physical touch in order to propose that butch untouchability multiplies the possibilities of touch. In exploring the connections between trauma and touch, I am especially interested in the relation between emotional and sexual untouchability, which can be continuous but are not necessarily equivalent. To what extent does the stone or untouchable butch who resists being sexually touched also resist being made to feel, in part because feeling is associated with vulnerability and femininity? Emotional untouchability can be the public side of sexual untouchability when the butch lesbian's (female) masculinity depends on and is defined by her refusal to be made emotionally vulnerable or to display feeling publicly or openly. This form of (emotional) untouchability plays an extremely important role in butch responses to homophobia and harassment. A stone attitude was a form of protection against the raids and arrests that were a regular occurrence in pre-Stonewall bar culture as well as against the harassment that butch women working in factories frequently experienced. Refusing to show that one had been affected by insults, strip searches, rapes, beatings, and other forms of psychic, physical, and sexual trauma to which lesbians were subject was a significant form of butch resistance. Public vulnerability was a threat to a butch's dignity and safety. Furthermore, with public recognition of homophobic harassment and violence virtually nonexistent during the period of pre-Stonewall bar culture, a butch had to rely on the support of intimate relationships and her own emotional resources for acknowledgment of trauma. Butch-femme culture serves as a strong reminder that the institutionalization of public responses to trauma are unevenly distributed, revealing cases in which the traces of socially produced trauma are only visible within the intimacies of sexual and emotional lives.

Untouchability can thus be a public performance presented both to a homophobic, straight culture,

and within lesbian culture, although its styles and reception may differ in each case. It also, though, has more private dimensions. The popular phrase "butch in the streets, femme between the sheets," used sometimes to poke fun at or even ridicule a butch whose public untouchability was not consistent with her private or sexual behavior, indicates untouchability's multiple forms as both social and sexual, both public and private style. Its variable meanings are related to the double status of *touch* as both an emotional and physical category, to the metaphorical slippages that enable the physical dimensions of touch to stand for, or make material, emotional forms of power and that make it possible to refer to being emotionally affected as "being touched."

I've long been interested in an apparent paradox of butch sexuality: that the butch who, in Nestle's words, takes "erotic responsibility" for her partner's sexual pleasure could, in her eagerness to tend to another's desires, as easily be considered feminine as masculine.[37] The links between gender and untouchability are not necessarily predictable since it is important to question the presumption that to be touched is to be feminized or that feminization is to be resisted. The gender of untouchability is at issue in a poem from *The Persistent Desire*, "When Butches Cry," in which Bonni Barringer challenges the received wisdom that butches do not show feeling:

> When butches cry
> They weep, they wail
> they gnash their teeth
> and moan
>
> Strong woman's pain
> it's just the same
> except it's mostly done
> alone.[38]

Barringer insists that butch feelings are not nonexistent but private. Barringer's use of the phrase "strong woman" makes the point that butches are in fact women despite their adoption of behavior conventionally gendered as masculine. Crying is a public performance of painful feelings, and often includes vocal and visible symptoms of emotion such as wailing, moaning, and the gnashing of one's teeth. The only thing that distinguishes a butch's expression of pain from that of other women is that it's "done alone." It's a performance that externalizes feeling (and indeed suggests that feeling may exist only as performance) yet has no audience. The butch's privacy, her isolation, her inability to make her feelings public in both intimate and more public contexts leads to her misapprehension, including presumptions about her untouchability or lack of feeling. In Barringer's poem, the butch's burden is an excess of feeling that looks like no feeling at all; while the butch's feelings may be secret, they may also be unrecognized by those who seek a direct relation between internal and external emotional states, or that particular style of emotional performance in which the sign of big feelings is big expression.

These representations of butch feeling convey a sense that vulnerability is not a sign of disempowerment but a privilege that is often unavailable and harder to achieve than the conventional stereotype of women as sentimental would have it. By suggesting that the confinement of tears to a private space is a hardship, Barringer challenges the assumption that such secrecy is a face-saving source of strength. Moreover, the poem asserts that being a strong woman and experiencing pain are not mutually exclusive, and it grants butches the power to be as expressive as other women.

Thus, if the poem's references to butch lack of expression seem negative, it is important to remember that it is also a valorization of femme emotional styles, such as an ability to display feeling

without shame. One of the powers of butch-femme relationships is the femme's sensitivity to the possible wariness or untouchability of butches. Mykel Johnson says that "loving a butch woman also meant learning the places she held back, recognizing her hesitations with regard to receiving my caresses."[39] Providing an antidote to a public arena in which the butch must remain tough and invulnerable to homophobic attack, the bedroom provides a space in which loss of control or vulnerability means safety rather than weakness.[40] The femme's greater ease with sexual expression or loss of control can sometimes offer a model for the butch, but femmes also describe their butch lovers' fear of feeling in sympathetic ways that do not pathologize them. As Johnson remarks, "Being femme for me is linked to my treasuring of butch women, to my deep erotic need and hunger for the qualities that have banished her. To be femme is to give honor where there has been shame."[41]

A Callous around My Heart

In *Loving in the War Years*, Cherríe Moraga links sexual and emotional untouchability because she understands butch lesbian feelings (and the avoidance of feelings) as a response not just to norms of gender and sexuality but to traumatic histories of racism and colonization. She traces her butch Chicana lesbian identity to the myth of Hernán Cortéz's mistress La Malinche/Malintzin, who supposedly betrayed the indigenous peoples by allowing herself to be sexually seduced and hence dominated. Also known as La Chingada, "the fucked one," La Malinche's role as a sexualized emblem of colonization is consolidated by the symbolic significance of penetration as traumatizing.

I repeat here the passage that began this chapter, in which Moraga explains her butch desire to avoid the experience of being penetrated: "Nobody wants to be made to feel the turtle with its underside all exposed, just pink and folded flesh. . . . In the effort not to feel fucked, I became the fucker, even with women. In the effort not to feel pain or desire, I grew a callous around my heart and imagined I felt nothing at all."[42] For Moraga, the physical dimensions of sexual acts have emotional as well as sexual meanings, and like Freud, she creates an image of trauma in terms of the violation of physical and fleshly boundaries. She extends the imagery of the body/vagina's permeability to the heart and imagines not feeling anything as the physical effect of growing a callous around her heart.[43] Distinctions between being open and being closed are connected to those between feeling and not feeling, and are mapped onto the body by symbolic processes; physical touch becomes emotional touch, but the body also serves as the materialization of social processes. Being made to feel, and especially the physical or sensuous experience of being penetrated, is a rich locus of social meaning, and the physical and sexual are linked not just to the emotional but to conceptions of gender, sexuality, race, and nationality. Especially charged are the connections between penetration, public humiliation, and feminization. Moraga's attention to the role of masculinity in race and national identity is one of the major contributions of *Loving in the War Years*. The book echoes another crucial text of race, nation, and sexuality, Marlon Riggs's film *Black Is*, *Black Ain't* (1995), which connects homophobia in African American communities to a history of racist emasculations that have, in turn, given rise to a counterdiscourse of black nationalism that is intimately tied to styles of masculinity. Riggs is especially powerful in his exploration of the injunctions to deny feeling along with the stone relations between fathers and sons, which structure male homoeroticism as well as the homophobic fear of penetration and feeling. For Riggs, the political stakes of emotional expression are high—a necessary part of the challenge of producing an African American community that can embrace differences while resisting homophobia and the rigidities of cultural nationalism.

The links Moraga makes between butch emotional style and the history of colonization complicate what might seem like the pathologizing perspective of her strong equation of sexual and emotional untouchability, which leads her to depict butchness as limiting. In her important dialogue with Amber Hollibaugh, Moraga attributes her butch fantasy of maintaining control over a woman to a desire to be the capturer rather than captured, and she speaks enviously about what it might be like to eroticize surrender:

> *I do have some gut-level misgivings about my sexual connection with capture. It might feel very sexy to imagine "taking" a woman, but it has sometimes occurred at the expense of my feeling, sexually, like I can surrender myself to a woman—that is, always needing to be the one in control, calling the shots. It's a very butch trip and I feel like this can keep me private and protected and can prevent me from fully being able to express myself.*[44]

Moraga is a butch who willingly expresses the desire to feel: "So retaining my 'butchness' is not exactly my desired goal. . . . I know there's a huge part of me that wants to be handled in the way that I described I can handle another woman."[45] Her comments powerfully rewrite the stigmas against femme sexuality and being made vulnerable.[46] Moraga stresses her butch power to enable femme surrender and expression, to heal the deepest wounds. Moraga's account of butch discomfort complements Barringer's construction of the butch as womanly because they both articulate butch identity in ways that do not demand a rejection of female vulnerability or womanliness, especially a femininity defined in terms of the capacity to feel.

Even as Moraga describes the rigidity of the links that equate fucker/ fucked, masculine/feminine, and colonizer/colonized, she also reveals those links to be the product of metaphorical slippages. It is through a phantasmatic process that the female body can be represented as a turtle with a hard protective shell and pink fleshy underside; Moraga's use of a metaphor to represent vaginal penetration as vulnerability and her image of the heart with the callous around it indicate that the body is an imaginary locus of meaning rather than a stable ground, although it is also a powerful vehicle for the materialization of symbolic meanings. [47] Moraga's account of the rigidly binaristic meanings of feeling and not feeling, and embodiment and disembodiment, is supplemented in *Loving in the War Years* by a range of alternative fantasies of hermaphroditic, monstrous, and bodiless selves. Working through the "flesh of the fantasy," Moraga finds imaginative possibility in refiguring the relations among body, feeling, gender, and nation as she tries to answer the question, "What, indeed, must my body look like if I were both the chingada and the chingon?"[48] As graphic and sensational as the cultural constructions that make penetration so meaningful, Moraga's fantasies of white doctors and sinister priestesses take her away from the body, yet also make imaginative use of it. Her return to the flesh and feeling is prompted by her realization that in denying her body in order to avoid feminized feeling, she is denying her racial identity as well. The essay "Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios" culminates in the image of a woman coming out of her mouth, "hay una mujer que viene de la boca," an image that represents the expression of feeling as a physical movement from internal to external, an inversion of penetration.[49] Moraga's understanding of butch sexuality as a response to colonialism's structures of feeling offers testimony to the difficulty of representing feeling in terms other than stigmatized notions of vulnerability. The value of butch discourse is its power to articulate experiences of feeling that are not castigated as feminine or expected to take forms associated with mental and emotional health, such as openness or expressiveness.

Feelings Clenched like a Fist

While Moraga claims that she is often numb or closed to feeling, Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* suggests that butches may suffer from too much feeling rather than too little and that sexual untouchability need not mean emotional untouchability. There are many reasons for the popularity of *Stone Butch Blues*, including the butch survival and heroism of its central character as well as Feinberg's emerging status as an important spokesperson for transgenderism. Although *Stone Butch Blues* has increasingly been read as a narrative about transgendered identity, I focus here more on its representation of butch identity and, more specifically, how it contributes to an understanding of butchness as an emotional style.[50] I would argue that a major source of the novel's appeal is its emotional power, especially its use of sentimental and melodramatic narrative modes.[51] Butch untouchability establishes a tension between private and public, and interiorized and expressed feeling that gives rise not just to the blues of the novel's title but to a melodramatic narrative. In addition to its associations with African American culture, the blues has associations with both masculine and feminine traditions; naming *Stone Butch Blues* as melodrama installs it within a strongly feminized tradition.

Stone Butch Blues is structured as a letter that will articulate the feelings that Jess was unable to express to her ex-lover Theresa when they broke up, a parting prompted by Theresa's increasing commitment to lesbian feminist culture and her inability to support Jess's painful conclusion that she wants to take hormones and pass in order to circumvent the harassment as well as dislocation she experiences as a "he-she." The letter that Jess is finally able to write to Theresa many years later becomes the novel's first chapter, and it opens with a public expression of tears: "I'm lying on my bed tonight missing you, my eyes all swollen, hot tears running down my face."[52] *Stone Butch Blues* combines the public, though still personal, address of the letter with the more impersonal, and hence more public, address of a novel.[53] Jess's shift to novelistic discourse in the subsequent chapters represents the painful fact that she cannot deliver her letter to Theresa. The more intimate form of expression generally available to exlovers is denied to her by the circumstances of their parting, which Jess's narrative reveals to be the product of historical circumstances, including homophobia, not just personal differences. Feinberg thus reverses the hierarchy that assigns greater aesthetic significance to the more impersonal and public genre, the novel, over the letter. For Jess, the novel is a letter manqué, the public discourse that stands in for the impossibility of private communication.

Jess's public expression of feeling represents a considerable achievement since she has struggled with the sense that a central aspect of her butch freakishness is her peculiar emotional style. She tells Theresa: "I don't think I have feelings like other people do. Sometimes you want me to talk to you about howI feel and I can't figure out if I'm like other people inside. Maybe I don't have real feelings" (Feinberg 150). The novel's frequent references to Jess's inability and unwillingness to express her feelings suggests otherwise, indicating that not showing feelings is not at all the same as not having them. "I hadn't really let myself feel anything about breaking up with Theresa until that moment. I almost cried out loud, but I clamped my emotions like a tourniquet. I had no privacy here, no space anywhere in the world where it was safe to grieve" (157). In addition to its narrative of public harassment and physical violence, *Stone Butch Blues* is an intense drama of emotional anguish, borrowing the language of repression to render vivid the pain of unexpressed feeling.

Jess is particularly aware of her emotional stone nature in her relations with femmes, whose ability to draw out their butches, to create a receptive space for emotional intimacy, is still not always sufficient to melt her stone. Butch-femme is as much an emotional as a sexual interplay, in which the

untouchable butch can be seduced by the femme's receptive sympathy. The emotional intimacy provided by a (femme) lover, which is also one of the forms of affective labor provided by heterosexual domesticity, offers solace for a range of forms of public experience, including not just work life but homophobic violence. Homosexual coupledom may well have a greater weight to bear in easing the emotional discrepancies between private, domestic life and other contexts.

One of the most remarkable femmes that Jess meets is her friend Jan's lover, Edna. On hearing about how Jan's untouchability led to their breakup, Jess wonders whether her own untouchability will ultimately affect her desirability. "I obsessed about one thing Jan had told me: Edna prided herself on being able to seduce her stone butch lovers. I wondered how she did it. I wondered how it would feel to be touched and not be afraid" (94). Jess is curious enough about Edna's seductive powers to flirt with her: "I wanted to ask her to teach me how to let myself be touched" (103). Out of loyalty to Jan and a sense of her own immaturity, Jess doesn't pursue her interest in Edna. But years later, after she has broken up with Theresa and retreated into the isolation of passing as a man, she meets Edna again and they briefly become involved. Edna's femme power lies in her ability to see that beyond the show of stone that Jess and other butches present to the public world and even to their lovers, they are extremely vulnerable. She says, "I love butches' hearts. But the ones I worry most about are the ones who aren't tough inside. . . . You and Rocco [another 'granite' butch] both had beautiful hearts that were so easily hurt, and I loved you for it. But I didn't know how long you could survive" (213– 14). Moved by Edna's femme understanding, her ability to see without having to be shown, Jess expresses her gratitude by writing her a poem describing how "you touched my loneliness" (217). She asks Edna, "Was that expressing a feeling?" (217), searching for the femme's affirmation that her butch style is a true sign of feeling.

Even though she loves the power of femmes to encourage her expression, Jess must ultimately find her own language. "Femmes always tried to teach me to talk about my feelings, but it was their words they used for their feelings. I needed my own words—butch words to talk about butch feelings" (275). Jess's emotional untouchability is far more difficult to address than her sexual untouchability: "When I shut down sexually, Theresa could always melt my stone. But when I turned into one big emotional rock, when I completely shut down like a slab of granite and needed her to chip away until I was free, she railed against me. It didn't work. I was still trapped in stone" (147). Once Jess establishes her passing identity, she becomes increasingly closed and isolated. In one especially poignant episode, her male coworker Ben reveals his own history to her in a moment of butch bonding facilitated by Jess's ability to give him sympathetic attention without saying anything. (Femme receptivity and butch silence are interestingly similar.) Jess is unable to reciprocate Ben's intimacy, and the inequality of their exchange hurts him because he is "naked" and exposed while she remains "closed and protected" (185). She recognizes in him her own emotional style: "Funny how much men express in a few flat words. It was a butch's way, too, of revealing heart" (184).[54] Foreclosed even from masculine modes of emotional expression, Jess experiences her extreme untouchability as a loss of self. "The loneliness became more and more unbearable. I ached to be touched. I feared that I was disappearing and I'd cease to exist if someone didn't touch me" (Feinberg 185).

An Archive of Butch Feelings

The emotional literacy that Jess ultimately acquires is a function of finding the cultural language to express stone butch feelings, including stone butch blues. Addressed as a letter to the femme who is capable of melting Jess's stone, the novel is grounded in a fantasy of the sympathetic reception that enables her to express herself, if only belatedly. But it is important that Theresa is a fantasy addressee, not an actual one, because the address thus becomes public, going beyond the intimacy of the couple. Furthermore, the letter sustains the intricate dynamic between speaking and silence that is ultimately the emotional stone butch challenge to simple dichotomies between expressing and not expressing emotion.

The "heart" of Jess's letter is her memory of how she and Theresa responded to a particularly traumatic arrest. Jess's difficulty in expressing herself to Theresa is linked to their public life and vulnerability to harassment. In one of the novel's most wrenching episodes, Jess is arrested and assaulted in jail by police officers. At least as painful as the physical and public violence, though, is Jess's inability to discuss what has happened with Theresa because even communication with her lover forces her to confront the humiliation she has experienced. Jess confesses that she never told Theresa what happened that night, and she doesn't tell us either. The sign of intimacy is not having to say everything, being granted the dignity of refraining from the trauma of rehearsing the pain and humiliation again. Theresa offers her the sanctuary of not having to expose herself in the way that she is too often forced to do publicly. The thought of her lover waiting at home helps her to survive the assault, but one of Theresa's acts of kindness is to leave her "alone to wash off the first layer of shame. . . . You treated my stone self as a wound that needed loving healing" (9). Jess articulates stone butch emotional style as a complex interplay between expression and withdrawal. If her letter is the place where she can reveal what she never said before, it also affords her the comfort of saying, "Do I have to tell you every detail? Of course not" (10).

When Theresa cautiously enters the bathroom where Jess has been bathing her battered body, "the terrifying image I had held back came flooding into the front of my mind: the memory of Theresa's face when I was arrested. In her eyes I had seen the pain of being overpowered and helpless. It was the way I felt almost everyday of my life" (137). Theresa's sympathetic recognition is almost unbearable for Jess. Watching "the pattern of emotions on Theresa's face shift like sand dunes in the wind," Jess can find no words for what has happened; Theresa has no words either but gives her the "gentleness and safety" (137) that she needs.

Later, in a moment that is prominent in both the letter and subsequent retelling of the Rochester arrest in the lengthier narrative of the novel, Theresa has a more vocal outburst of anger and frustration about not having been able to help Jess resist the police.

Theresa sat at the kitchen table, with her head in her hands. I noticed the level of whiskey left in the bottle. I pulled her head against my belly and stroked her hair. "I'm sorry," she kept repeating. "I'm so sorry." She lurched to her feet and fell heavily against me. I felt the frustration building in her body like a storm. I heard it in the small strangulated sounds from her throat. She pounded me with her fists. "I couldn't stop them. They cuffed me so fast. I just couldn't do anything," she cried.

That's exactly how I felt. We really were in this life together. We might not have the words, but we both knew exactly what we were choking on. There were so many things I wanted to tell her in that moment. Feelings worked themselves up to my throat and then stuck there, clenched like a fist. (137)

In the letter version of this encounter, written in the second-person address, Jess admits to Theresa that she wanted to tell her about this moment of identification but couldn't.

I've always wanted to tell you this. In that one moment I knew you really did understand how I felt in life. Choking on anger, feeling so powerless, unable to protect myself or those I loved most, yet fighting back again and again, unwilling to give up. I didn't have the words to tell you this then. I just said, "It'll be ok, it'll be alright." (10)

The letter reveals what she could not then articulate: her sense that she shares with Theresa the experience of inexpressible frustration. Difficult as it is to tolerate her femme lover's ability to mirror her feelings, Jess here acknowledges Theresa's understanding of stone butch feeling. The circuit in which butch identifies with butch-identified femme can be completed when Jess is willing to acknowledge her own experiences of the pain that Theresa feels. Sometimes feelings are "stuck . . . clenched like a fist."

The letter consists of the "butch words" that express "butch feelings," as does the novel more generally. It is melodramatic, in the best sense of the word, because it expresses what is unspeakable, marks the terrain of what cannot be said.[55] It also exhibits the melodramatic structure of belatedness, of information that is revealed too late to be of use. The novel is the product of Jess's ability to risk a public audience for sentiments that frequently only find their way to lovers who are receptive listeners. But the letter's emotional power draws on the poignancy of its undeliverability.

Even though it can't be delivered to Theresa, Jess's letter has a destination. "Since I can't mail you this letter, I'll send it to a place where they keep women's memories safe. Maybe someday, passing through this big city, you will stop and read it" (Feinberg 12). Jess seems to be referring here to New York's Lesbian Herstory Archives, and she imagines the public space of the archives as a place where her letter might find its destination. (In fact, the letter that begins *Stone Butch Blues* was first published in *The Persistent Desire*, whose editor, Joan Nestle, is also one of the founders of the archives. It's somehow appropriate that one of the recipients of Jess's letter should be such a public and eloquent spokesperson for femme lesbianism.) The Lesbian Herstory Archives is necessitated by many forms of trauma, both insidious and overt, including silences, disrupted communications, lack of history and documentation, and homophobia, all of which have both public and private consequences, including Jess and Theresa's breakup. It is not a traditional public archive, having struggled for its existence without the institutional sanction or financial support that creates public libraries. The Lesbian Herstory archives, and others like it, has been established from below in an effort to demonstrate that lesbianism has a history and to save materials that might otherwise be destroyed either because of overt hostility or ignorance. And in order to make erotic feelings the subject of archival history, the Lesbian Herstory Archives collects letters, diaries, flyers, and other ephemeral materials that might seem personal or private. Jess imagines the public space of the archives as one in which her lost lover might find her words; the archive thus has the potential to become a space for intimate communication.

It is remarkable that so public a place as an archive could be considered a safe place for Jess's letter. Her letter stands as a marker of so many other letters that were likely never written because there is no language, even a language of intimacy between lovers, to capture the affective experience of butch lesbians beaten and humiliated on the streets. Even when written, Jess's narrative contains emotional and experiential gaps—one does not really know what happened in that jail in Rochester. The archive of lesbian feeling must be big enough to hold these traumatic absences. They are the archival equivalent of the femme's ability to let her butch lover remain silent.

Public and private feeling commingle in *Stone Butch Blues* since the public arena structures the private exchange of feeling and the public expression of feeling does not always compensate for feelings that remain privately uncommunicated. Jess's untouchability cannot be read merely as an absence of public display, gendered (however questionably) as masculine; it is the sign of utmost vulnerability and a queer and passionate response to homophobia. Butch untouchability is a form of feeling that serves as a register of both homophobic and queer emotion even when it seems invisible. Not just in spite of but because of her untouchability, Jess has a heart.

Butch Wounds

I have reservations about making the butch dyke "represent" a theoretical position, such as the performativity of gender identity, because I find that the fleshly complexity of butch (and femme) lives exceeds any theoretical abstractions that might presume to describe it. At the risk of doing so, I'd like to close by juxtaposing the untouchable butch with the serial killer. In *Serial Killers*, Mark Seltzer investigates the "pathological public sphere" or "wound culture" that takes the form of "public fascination with torn and open bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound."[56] The paradigmatic figure in Seltzer's wound culture is the serial killer, whose repetitive violence attempts to manage the threat of collapsing boundaries between inside/outside, self/other, psychic/social that trauma poses. What if, instead, the butch dyke were to become trauma culture's representative? Although she might not be "one of the superstars of our wound culture," she could merit attention precisely because she is so likely to be overlooked in the quest for media celebrities and sensations to exemplify trauma cultures (Seltzer 2).

In the leap from the serial killer to trauma culture, Seltzer presumes in his own way the traumatic nature of the breach between self and other, between inside and outside, that characterizes Freud's image of trauma. "One detects the model of a sociality bound to pathology. In short, the opening of relation to others (the 'sympathetic social bond') is at the same time the traumatic collapse of boundaries between self and other (a yielding of identity to identification). In this way, the opening of the possibility of relation to others also opens the possibility of violence" (Seltzer 258). The serial killer becomes the representative of a pathological self that cannot stand to be wounded. (As Seltzer points out, the serial killer as social type is also linked to the homosexual, another category of the perverted self that comes into being in the late nineteenth century when particular acts, such as sex and crime, become the basis for categories of identity.) The butch lesbian is also concerned to maintain the boundaries and integrity of the self, but is capable of feeling as well; she can be both touched and untouched. And the femme does not see penetration or violation of bodily boundaries to be a crisis of subjectivity, although she may experience it as a risky vulnerability. Butch-femme discourse trafficks in the fraught distinctions between self and other, inside and outside, and the psychic and material, but it makes of them something different than the violence of the serial killer. Trauma and penetration are still linked, but numbness and fears of feeling or vulnerability are complex modes of response and resistance rather than pathological. Moreover, as Bersani suggests, even if sex and trauma are fundamentally linked with one another, there are many ways in which this linkage can be lived and conceptualized.

The sexual and emotional intimacies of touching and being touched are made public within butch-femme sexual discourse, which builds sexual public cultures around the sharing of sexual experience. The importance of a public culture around sex extends also to the formation of public cultures around different aspects of emotional life. As both sexual and emotional publics, butch-femme cultures serve as a resource for rethinking the presumptions about penetration and vulnerability that underpin trauma theory. Butch dykes reconfigure the meanings of being hard or numb, showing both its necessity and difficulty, giving dignity to the moments when it is not possible to be vulnerable and also revealing the many ways in which vulnerability can be performed. Femmes also provide a range of ways of being open without being passive or stigmatized, rewriting the meanings of vulnerability and receptivity. Just as a wider range of possibilities for emotional response and its complexity makes it possible to expand understandings of gender, so too does it help in recognizing the many ways in which people live and respond to trauma without pathologizing them as abnormal.

It may seem like something of a tangent to relate trauma to butchfemme sexuality (although it should be noted that a "tangent" is another concept rooted in touch). But it is useful to examine everyday practices to understand trauma—in this case, the ways in which touching and being touched, both sexually and emotionally, are means by which somatic and psychic experience is negotiated. Experts in PTSD are increasingly turning to the body as a place where trauma is both experienced and healed; variations in everyday somatic and emotional experience will surely affect responses to both trauma and therapy. Butch-femme intimacies reveal a diversity of sexual and emotional practices, the understanding of which is relevant to both clinical and cultural approaches to trauma.

It is important to acknowledge how the proudly working-class identities of many of the writers explored here (and the links between butchfemme and working-class cultures more generally) influence their articulations of sexual and emotional style. Affective expression is coded by class, as much as by categories of race, gender, and sexuality, and middleclass norms often dictate what is deemed appropriate. That some people such as Jess find that there is "no space in the world where it [is] safe to grieve" speaks to the ways in which access to institutions or cultural formations that make affective expression public is a class privilege, with therapy being one especially notable example. Working-class values are present in butch-femme rejection of middle-class politeness and propriety around sexuality and in the power of community. What is remarkable about butch-femme culture is how, building on the resourcefulness of working-class culture, it has forged survival strategies for weathering traumatic affective experience without benefit of public recognition or institutional support. Within butch-femme culture, the intimacy of sexuality serves as a semipublic sphere that makes up for the failures of the public sphere, providing the space for emotional expression that is not available elsewhere. Writing about these emotional and sexual intimacies becomes a way of forging a public sphere that can accommodate them. Moreover, butch-femme writing participates in and creates the sexual public cultures that are a resource for lesbian responses to more overt forms of sexual trauma such as incest, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

3 Sexual Trauma/Queer Memory: Incest, Lesbianism, and Therapeutic Culture

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is invariably the scene of controversy, and one of the 1994 festival's flashpoints was the performance of Tribe 8, San Francisco's notorious dyke punk band. Their reputation preceded them in the program, where they announced themselves as a "blade-brandishing, gang-castrating, dildo-swingin', bullshit-detecting, aurally pornographic, Neanderthal-pervert band of patriarchy-smashing snatchlickers."[1] On the evening of their performance some of this language, offered as incontrovertible evidence that Tribe 8 was promoting violence against women, resurfaced on a protest sign displayed at the entrance to the stage area. Other protesters formulated their objections to Tribe 8 in a sign warning survivors of incest and sexual abuse that they might not want to attend the show because it included "explicit sexual violence," and instructing them about where to seek support if necessary. Explanations of why explicit sexual violence in a performance might be disturbing frequently referred to the danger of triggering flashbacks. Tribe 8's performance was not alone in provoking discussions of the *trigger* and *flashback* at Michigan, where the concept of *safe space* is integral to the notion of "womyn's land" as a sanctuary. Safe space is highly contested and constantly negotiated terrain "on the land," emerging not only around debates about S/M but also around controversies about separate space for women of color, visual access to signers for deaf women, and the styles of music played in public work spaces. The S/M debates that raged at the festival a few years ago seem to have reached something of a truce. There is a designated camping area ("The Twilight Zone") for S/M activities, and S/M workshops are held alongside those about issues such as ritual abuse and negotiating healthy relationships. But these workshops are given official status only on the condition that no enactments of S/M take place, so as to prevent women who have been sexually abused from accidentally or involuntarily witnessing this behavior and being painfully reminded of their own traumatic experiences.[2]

Two moments in Tribe 8's show seemed particularly susceptible to warnings.[3] During the song "Femme Bitch Top," the backup singers, dressed in full-femme regalia, lightly whip lead singer Lynn Breedlove. And during the song "Frat Pig," a fantasy about revenge through gang castration, Breedlove, always a flamboyant performer, is at her spectacular best when she cuts off her strapped-on dildo with the large knife she has been wielding. Tribe 8 constitutes a noise problem as well as an image problem, especially since their appearance was heralded by some as a breakthrough moment for punk and/or loud music given Michigan's tradition of quieter and more melodious brands of "womyn's" music.[4] The audience was itself part of the performance, since Tribe 8, in good punk/grunge fashion, inspired an all-girl mosh pit and stage diving. It's hard to say whether the mosh pit was a violation of safe space or the preservation of it; in true Michigan spirit, the pit was carefully marked off like other "special interest" audience areas such as the chem- and smoke-free spaces. But within those boundaries, women were free to create their own lezzie version of an ostensibly masculinist tradition, and they proceeded to forge an intricate balance between physical abandon and attention to other bodies. Slamming and moshing may be excuses for straight male homoeroticism, but that makes them perfect for adaptation by dykes in search of rituals for public and group eroticism. As an initially tentative and then increasingly fearless participant, I can testify that moshing's appearance of physical danger is deceptive, and that one of its pleasures is its power to work with this fear; it offers the physical pleasure of touching lots of different (and at Michigan mostly naked) bodies as well as the psychic pleasure of overcoming resistance to collective and/or anonymous erotic connections. Mosh pits provide an arena for exploring the physical and psychic dimensions of safe space—a process that includes the solicitation of fear and danger.

Let's play gang castrate. Tribe 8's Lynn Breedlove performs "Frat Pig" at the 1994 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Stills from the video Radical Act, dir. Tex Clark.

Tribe 8 confronted the problem of causing trauma for incest survivors head on when some of the band's members identified themselves as survivors of sexual abuse. They explained how their music and performances allow them to unleash aggression and pain. For instance, Leslie Mah's "Mom Gone Song" is about her mother's failure to deal with her own history of sexual abuse.[5] "All I Can Do," an emotionally and physically graphic account of what it's like to be the lover of a survivor, is a powerful meditation on flashbacks ("I'm not that prick wielding his dick like / some kind of weapon").[6] Their performance blurs the distinctions between pro-sex practices, sexual violence, and incest survivorhood in order to reveal that their intimate connections may be productive rather than a cause for alarm. Sexual abuse and incest were frequently broached in the workshop the group held following their performance. Many workshop participants testified to having undergone a conversion experience when they saw the band in action and realized that the performance was about addressing violence, not promoting it. Like a professional workshop leader, Breedlove gave the group instructions on how to find cheap dildos to sacrifice and eloquently testified to the therapeutic power of mock castration. Her performance offers further evidence of the complexity and variety of lesbian dildo use, especially since she cuts off a dildo that she herself is wearing. The violence of castration is thus directed as much at herself as it is externally, refusing any simple division between the subject and object of violence. Breedlove, though, emerges triumphant from the aggressive act of castration, holding the severed dildo aloft as if to suggest that castration is survivable, at least for those who don't have real penises. And although it is not a real penis, a dildo is a real object, and the physical force required to cut it in two adds to the symbolic power of the performance. The "explicit" is always a convention, and in part a convention for collapsing the distinction between representation and reality; Breedlove's ritual takes full advantage of castration's fusion of the physical and cultural, making the gesture of cutting culturally meaningful because it is physically powerful. Its healing power depends on its capacity to make sexual violence explicit and to embody cultural meanings in a physical or material performance.[7]

Nonetheless, the claim that a practice will produce flashbacks remains a potent accusation. I find this quite striking given the positive role of repetition and the recovery of memory—both of them versions of the flashback—in therapy. The fear of the flashback does not allow for the ambivalent power of repeated, and especially ritualized, violence to heal and/or perpetuate an original trauma. The "violence" of Tribe 8's performance, and the physical release that the mosh pit enabled, can be understood as a ritualized repetition that transforms earlier scenes of violence. (If anything, the mosh pit might be *too* contained.) Indeed, the power of the notion of safe space resides in its double status as the name for both a space free of conflict *and* a space in which conflict and anger can emerge as a necessary component of psychic resolution. The controversies at the Michigan festival, which is dedicated to being a concrete staging ground for the meaning of safe space, indicate the unpredictable effects of the coexistence of conflict and safety. Even a question such as "Do I feel safe?" can be hard to answer. Lesbian processing is often viewed derisively (the term *politically correct* figures prominently here), not least by dykes themselves. I would suggest, however, that the debates spawned at Michigan and elsewhere, and the pain and conflict inevitably unleashed when safe spaces are established, should be considered signs of success rather than failure.[8] Trouble sets in when controversy is viewed not as an integral part of transformation but as something to be avoided. (Although, to make this statement is to run the risk of domesticating controversy in the process of welcoming it.)

Both staged performances and sexual activities, especially ones with an overtly performative dimension, such as S/M and other kinds of roleplaying, can knowingly court the relation between sex play and incest.[9] The links between sex play and sexual abuse arise, for example, in a *Village Voice* column in which Donna Minkowitz describes finding her "top within" in a relationship with a lover who has a history of abusive relations. [10] Similarly, a story in *On Our Backs* explores the phenomenon of "dyke daddies," who enact scenes of abuse with their partners.[11] The pleasure of out-topping her toppy girlfriend enables Minkowitz to overcome a fear of identifying with the role of perpetrator or abuser (associated with her own violent father)—a fear that has kept her playing the bottom in her sexual relationships. Risking repetition, Minkowitz finds that pulling her lover's hair and making her "wait to come until she was howling with pure need" is *not* like her father's behavior: "My father's violence violated trust, but my own aggression depended on trust, and was worthy of it" (18). Like dyke daddies or Breedlove wielding her dildo, Minkowitz tops as a way of

playing with trauma; her fantasies of control ward off the threat of victimization.

Minkowitz characterizes her playful response to trauma as avoiding what she describes as the masculine pattern of passing on abuse by becoming a perpetrator. Topping, moreover, represents an alternative to the traditional "female" response of adopting the position of "victim," which she identifies as the Dworkinite *via negativa* of refusing all association with anger and aggression. Like Tribe 8, she draws her inspiration from a different feminist camp, the advocates of pro-sex lesbianism and S/M, and posits relations of dominance and submission as a mechanism for healing from incest rather than as its perpetration by other means. Too often, lesbian subcultures that focus on healing from abuse and those that encourage sexual exploration have been constructed, and have constructed themselves, as mutually exclusive, repeating anew the schism between pleasure and danger, and ignoring the fact that one of the most interesting things about sex is that it so frequently refuses that distinction.[12] In fact, the specter of incest haunts discussions of S/M and top/bottom relations within lesbian communities, as though any hint that S/M resembles sexual abuse were conclusive evidence of its perversity rather than a potential sign of its value.

Minkowitz attributes her willingness to link abuse and sex play to "queer" culture's penchant for irony. As she puts it, "The traditional queer response to trauma is fetish and fantasy" (18). The subversive possibilities of repetition with a difference, which have been valorized in discussions of butch-femme, drag, and other queer cultural practices, therefore provide the basis for healing rituals and performances. Minkowitz's discussion of topping and trauma exemplifies Eve Sedgwick's notion of a queer "shame-creativity," which reclaims that which has been debased and repudiated.[13] A queer healing practice would turn negative affect or trauma on its head, but by embracing rather than refusing it. Furthermore, such a healing practice would challenge the repressive hypothesis so central to self-help and therapeutic discourses. It is in the interest of outlining the contributions of queer culture to an understanding of trauma that I bring lesbianism and incest together.

"Queer" therapy would also embrace rather than refuse the links between lesbian sexual practices and sexual abuse/incest.[14] This turns out to be easier said than done because the ties between lesbianism and incest, like those between S/M and incest, are taboo. At stake here is the matter of separating "homosexual identity" from the "sibling" perversions formulated by nineteenth-century sexological and subsequent therapeutic discourses. The construction of positive gay identities has often seemed to require their differentiation from other "perversions" or "deviant" sexual practices, or from psychiatric classifications of disease.

An unspoken fear about the connections between lesbianism and incest seems to be one explanation for a major obstacle I've encountered in exploring how and whether lesbian cultures transform therapeutic discourses. Despite their pronounced emphasis on "breaking the silence" about incest, many of the texts I've looked at in search of specifically lesbian narratives of sexual abuse, such as Ellen Bass and Laura Davis's selfhelp book *The Courage to Heal* as well as Louise Wisechild's collection *She Who Was Lost Is Remembered: Healing from Incest through Creativity*, have little to say about lesbianism.[15] It's not that lesbianism is "unspeakable"; it is, in fact, present everywhere in casual references to lovers who are obviously women or to feminist communities and support groups. But it seems odd that lesbianism should be so unremarkable in these texts, as though it could be so taken for granted that it would go without saying. I had expected, for example, mention of the relationship between coming out as a "lesbian" and coming out as an "incest survivor," especially since the latter is formulated as a category of (sexual) identity, and since both kinds of coming out can be so devastating to families (both in theory and practice).[16]

But no. For example, an article in the *Advocate* titled "Overcoming Silence: Lesbians Lead the Recovery Movement for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse," which notes that the lesbianism of many key figures in the recovery movement is not recognized by the mainstream press, fails to explore the relevance of lesbianism to their therapeutic work or interest in issues of sexual abuse.[17] Davis, coauthor with Bass of the best-selling *The Courage to Heal*, probably the most popular mainstream book devoted to "women survivors of child sexual abuse," is featured prominently in the *Advocate*'s article. Yet the primary connection made between lesbianism and incest consists in *disavowing* the connection. Says Davis: "If child sexual abuse was responsible for women becoming lesbians, then the lesbian population would be far greater than it is today. Sexual abuse may be one factor among many in someone's sexual orientation. But saying sexual abuse causes homosexuality is making an assumption that there's something wrong with being lesbian or gay."[18] Davis's remarks echo the position taken in *The Courage to Heal* itself, where one of the few pages indexed under the topic of lesbianism confines itself to a discussion of lesbianism as a "problem," providing advice not only about how to address the specter of causality but about what to do if you're not sure about your sexual identity or if you're uncomfortable with being a lesbian.[19]

But why can't saying that "sexual abuse causes homosexuality" just as easily be based on the assumption that there's something right, rather than something wrong, with being lesbian or gay? As someone who would go so far as to claim lesbianism as one of the *welcome* effects of sexual abuse, I am happy to contemplate the therapeutic process by which sexual abuse turns girls queer. I introduce the word *queer* to suggest the unpredictable connections between sexual abuse and its effects, to name a connection while refusing determination or causality. Queerness militates against the neatness of a heterosexual/homosexual binarism that might, for instance, indicate that a change of object choice

could heal the trauma of sexual abuse. But the rejection of causality, whether between queerness and lesbianism, or between sexual abuse and lesbianism, need not preclude the value of exploring the productive and dense relations among these terms.

The authors of *The Courage to Heal* are, however, more interested in a universalizing than a minoritizing approach to lesbian survivors of child sexual abuse and their therapists.[20] In one of the few other overt references to lesbianism in the book, a discussion of issues relevant to partners of survivors, they claim that "although there are significant differences in cultural conditioning, power dynamics, and role expectations between heterosexual and lesbian couples, these differences are far outweighed by the common problems all couples face when one or both partners are survivors."[21] *The Courage to Heal* does give a prominent place to lesbians, who are included in large numbers in the section on personal narratives and testimony, but pays little attention to the significance of their lesbianism in the context of either trauma or healing. If lesbianism is not silenced in *The Courage to Heal*, it remains strangely unsaid.[22]

I do not want to underestimate the many strategic reasons there are to avoid the lure of trying to identify the causes of homosexuality and to ward off bad versions of the associations between incest and lesbianism. (For example, a friend enrolled in a social work program tells me that she was recently "taught" that homosexuality in men is biological and in women is caused by sexual abuse.) In the fierce debates prompted by the recovered memory movement and its opponents in the false memory movement, there has been a certain amount of lesbian baiting, which is both homophobic and an articulation of antifeminism. *The Courage to Heal* has been disparaged as teaching women to be lesbians and man haters by readers who have found the specter of lesbianism entirely too present in the text. One imagines that Davis and Bass have been caught in the all too familiar dilemma of not wanting their position to be undermined by being pigeonholed as lesbians.

But the failure to discuss *The Courage to Heal*'s lesbian dimensions, understandable though it might be, also seems like a missed opportunity. As Davis's own lesbianism suggests, even if lesbianism isn't caused by incest, it certainly has a prominent place in the therapeutic cultures that address the problem of sexual abuse, and it is quite remarkable that the most popular self-help book on sexual abuse, read widely by all kinds of women, was written by two lesbians. I'm convinced that there are disproportionate numbers of lesbians in the "helping professions," including nursing, therapy, public interest law, teaching, and alternative healing practices such as massage. (Indeed, the helping professions might well be the dyke counterpart to the arts, fashion, and design as arenas for gay men—an equally fraught and cliché-ridden association.) Attention has been given to the implications of the "feminization" of caretaking and affective labor, but its "lesbianization" also deserves analysis. Surely the lesbian presence in therapeutic cultures has some impact on how healing is practiced and theorized. Moreover, the capacity of a highly profitable mainstream genre, the self-help book, to incorporate, however closeted, lesbian perspectives is an interesting case for studying how feminism and nonnormative sexualities can be popularized.

Although this chapter is not an investigation of lesbian therapists, it seeks to explore the intersections of lesbian and therapeutic cultures through attention to the queerness of trauma and healing. Such an investigation suggests, if only obliquely, another reason why *The Courage to Heal* might not be able to specify the relations between lesbianism and incest. Part of my point is that as with lesbianism, so with incest: "breaking the silence" is a queer process. As one measure of that silence, I have been looking for examples of incest narratives and therapeutic practices that complicate the psychodynamics of trauma and healing, as well as the connections, silent and spoken, between lesbianism and incest.

Coming Out With Secrets After Foucault

My investigation of trauma and therapeutic cultures also stems from my ongoing interest in the conflicted intersection between Michel Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis and the expression of emotion and sexuality. Occupying a vast portion of that intersection are institutions and discourses of therapy, everything from Freudian theory and classic psychoanalytic practice, to self-help and twelve-step groups, to mass culture genres such as women's magazines, television talk shows, and melodrama, to the ways people talk to one another about their lives and feelings. In its intimate connection with popular culture, and especially women's popular culture, therapeutic culture has been an important arena for feminist analysis.[23] It is tempting to valorize practices that allow women to express their feelings and tell their stories, if not to change their lives. But Foucault's work inspires a wary skepticism about the uses to which discourses that purport to reveal the truth of the self can be put. Armed with a critique of the institutions of power/knowledge that make confession and disclosure potentially less than liberatory, what does one make of "I Never Told Anyone" workshops that focus on the therapeutic value of disclosure, of "coming out" as an incest survivor?

A great deal in fact. The issue of incest and sexual abuse provides an especially apt and urgent example for the politics of therapy since feminist and therapeutic attention to it has been matched by the voracious appetite of mainstream culture, which has found plenty of opportunities to turn sexual abuse into media spectacle. There is a growing and important body of feminist work by scholars such as Linda Alcoff, Laura Gray, Vicki Bell, and Janice Haaken who take seriously the limits to the value of revealing secrets, even as they explore the transformative power of disclosure for both survivors and their audiences. Alcoff and Gray assess how survivor discourse is recuperated within the media in order to create sensationalist drama.[24] Bell distinguishes between forms of truth telling, emphasizing the differences between feminist therapeutic practice and the demand for confession.[25] Haaken's account of debates over false memory syndrome indicates the hazards for feminism of the demand that the female survivor present herself as an innocent victim.[26] Haaken also explores the feminization of therapy and the conflicted nature of therapist/client relations between women. These are only some of the issues examined by this body of work, which complements investigations of trauma, sexual abuse, and gender by feminist psychologists such as Judith Herman and Laura Brown.[27]

It is essential to keep in mind that incest stories or narratives are performances whose contexts may vary tremendously. An incest story could be offered up as testimony in court, an object of scrutiny on a television talk show, material for processing in a therapy session, a plea for public and political attention to the problem of sexual abuse, or a disruption of other political projects. The audience for the story is crucial to its effects, and some stories serve the interests of their listeners at the expense of the teller.[28] Both Bell as well as Alcoff and Gray, for example, emphasize the distinction between confession and witnessing, where witnessing requires a kind of participation on the part of the listener that is not merely voyeuristic.

These feminist inquiries indicate that conflicts between Foucault and feminism may well be false, and that critiques of the repressive hypothesis can *contribute* to explorations of the value of disclosure rather than undermining them. Concerned about preventing the exploitative and painful solicitation of traumatic experience, for instance, Alcoff and Gray's critique of disclosure explains why it doesn't always provide relief. A critique of testimony and/or confession can thus help to shape therapeutic practice.

Further confirmation of this is provided by the insights of lesbian and gay studies and queer theory, especially since most of the feminist accounts of therapy and incest discourse do not explicitly address lesbianism or foreground heterosexuality. Part of my goal in this chapter is to explore the place of lesbianism within therapeutic cultures in order both to guard against assuming them to be a monolith and to complicate the relation between therapy and politics. "Speaking out" or offering testimony about incest supplies a point of comparison with shifting constructions of the politics of coming out within gay and lesbian communities. Discussions of the "epistemology of the closet" as central to the paradigms that construct both homosexual identities and psychoanalytic discourse suggest new ways to think about the value of coming out as either gay or an incest survivor. Indeed, many narratives by survivors of incest and sexual abuse indicate that the trauma resides as much in secrecy as in sexual abuse—the burden not to tell creates its own network of psychic wounds that far exceed the event itself. By the same token, the work of breaking the silence about sexual abuse, like that of coming out, has to be understood as an ongoing process and performance, not as a punctual event. Recent queer/gay and lesbian theory, fortified by a critique of the repressive hypothesis, has been alert to the intricacies of acts of disclosure, where shifts in context, audience, and speaker can dramatically alter the meaning and effect of coming out, as well as what constitutes speaking or being silent (or silenced).

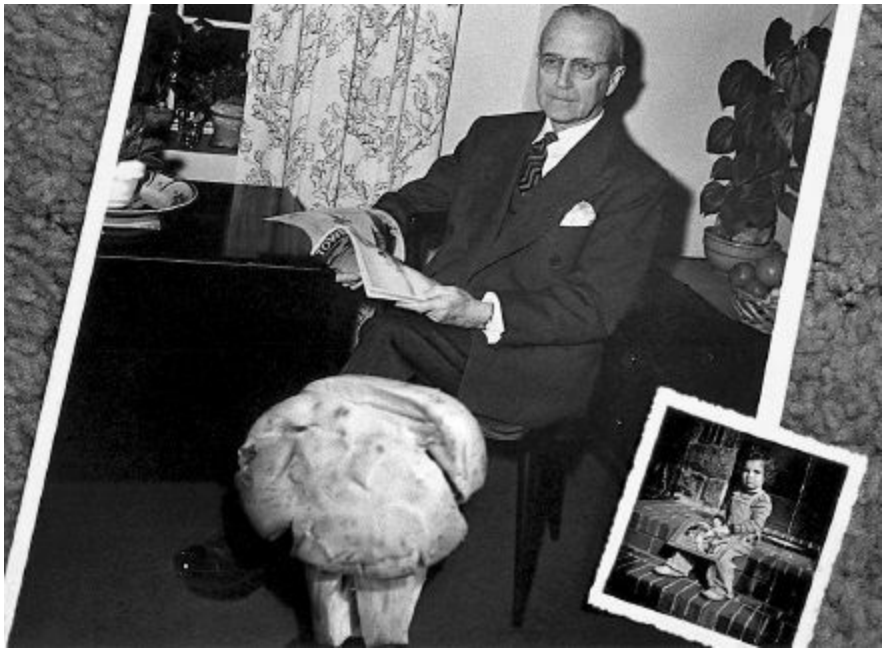
I will look here at Margaret Randall's This Is about Incest along with Dorothy Allison's novel *Bastard out of Carolina* and memoir *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, all of which are good examples of the complex and "queer" ways in which the individual survivor derives therapeutic value from "speaking out" about her personal experience.[29] Although both Randall and Allison are passionate about the value of truth telling for both personal healing and public intervention, their work is deceptive in its allegiance to this principle, for it demonstrates how imaginative work that may bear an oblique relation to the actual event of sexual abuse can ultimately be more "healing" than an explicit rendering of the event.

Ultimately I will return to self-help books through a discussion of Staci Haines's *The Survivor's Guide to Sex* in order to consider how cultural production and therapy can converge. I don't want my choice of examples to imply a preference for alternative, as opposed to mainstream, culture, or for culture over therapy. Just as there is no easy distinction between the straight and the lesbian in a comparison of *The Courage to Heal* and the work of Randall and Allison, the relations between mainstream and alternative cultures are unpredictable. Indeed, the crossover appeal of Allison's novel, which was first published by Dutton, makes her work hard to classify since most of her other writing has been published by the same small women's press, Firebrand, that published *This Is about Incest*.

In their particular attention to the peculiarities of trauma, more so than in any overt or covert lesbianism, This Is about Incest, *Bastard out of Carolina*, and *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure* suggest what the contributions of lesbian/queer culture might be to thinking about trauma and vice versa. They also point to healing as a process that engages the body and consists in rituals of performance that defy simple notions of disclosure.

Margaret Randall's Mushrooms

Donna Minkowitz's claim that top-bottom games can be healing, or that repetition of incest can also provide solace from it, is analogous to Margaret Randall's investigation in *This Is about Incest* of how her mushroom phobia is at once the block against and access to healing.[30] A combination of poems, essays, and photographs, Randall's record of her healing work in *This Is about Incest* articulates not only the personal and psychic value of breaking the silence and reconstructing memory but its connection to other political contexts as well. She argues that silence is not only one of the tactics through which compliance with violence in the family is bought; it is also a mechanism by which acquiescence to war, torture, and other forms of political terror is secured. Despite its commitment to openness about incest, however, Randall's book nowhere discusses her emerging lesbianism, although she has elsewhere written about the complex connections between her return to the United States from Nicaragua, the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) trial over her U.S. citizenship, her coming out as a lesbian, and her recovery of incest memories. In *Coming Home*, she reveals that in the period during which *This Is about Incest* was produced, she couldn't talk about her lesbianism anywhere, let alone in her published work, for fear that it would jeopardize her case since "sexual deviancy" is grounds for deportation.[31]



Photograph by Margaret Randall from This Is about Incest. Courtesy of Margaret Randall.

But even when ostensibly breaking the silence about incest, *This Is about Incest* is not exactly straightforward or overt. (The title itself is deceptively direct. The indexical "this" at once announces the book and fails to specify its contents; any "this" could be declared to be "about incest.") The book is a document of her therapeutic process, and thus the textual legacy of an *activity* that is not itself contained in the book. One of the tools of her "healing" work are photographs that resemble collages, the outcome of a process whereby Randall juxtaposes objects that resonate with the emotions attached to memories both recovered and still forgotten. Prominent in these compositions are old family photographs, especially ones depicting herself and her grandfather, some of which now, in her eyes,

reveal evidence of their violent relationship. Serving as the material for new photographs, the old images provide access to the past, not only because they represent it but because they are material objects. They facilitate memory retrieval in the form of bodily experience, prompted by the physical activity of arranging objects in preparation for creating a photograph. Neither the childhood photographs that bear witness to her traumatic relation to her grandfather by the work of *Nachträglichkeit* nor the new photographs that "reframe" the old ones to give them healing power work by representing the "event" of sexual abuse itself. Both as images and objects, the photographs are fetishes, linked by the logic of emotion to memories that they simultaneously announce and efface.

Playing a central role in the photographic series is the mushroom, the source of an intense phobia that Randall begins to explore in order to gain access to her past. The mushroom seems to be the (counter)fetish that "stands for" her grandfather's genitals. Yet such a crude interpretation of the "meaning" of the mushroom, designating the referent or denotation of this symbol, would be the worst type of psychoanalysis. Nowhere does Randall explicitly make this association. The closest Randall comes to explaining how mushrooms got attached to incest is in her account in *This Is about Incest* of the memory prompted by her photographic investigation of her phobia:

> *How does one sit on a floor in a room, confront the fear, retrieve the memory? . . .*
> *The camera is ready, take it in your hand, focus and see, focus first on his face, on you as a tiny child, on the mushroom, focus focus. . . . Why is the focus so hard to hold? I get his eyes, clear as their purpose. Or I get my own small features. His. Mine. His. Mine. Mine . . . and the mushroom, moving back and forth between the two. And I focus again, and I shoot, focus and shoot, bringing it up. And out.*
> *My mouth tastes funny now. I want to vomit. Saliva flows and flows, my mouth is filling with it, overflowing with it. Am I drooling? Filling, filling . . . and then I know. I know what he made me do. I know what he did to me. Another piece in the puzzle. Another memory retrieved. (21–22)*

Both the mushrooms and the act of photographing them become a means of recovering memory because they are a vehicle for physical activity and, as such, counteract the sense of physical and emotional helplessness that contributes to traumatic loss of memory.[32] In one series of photographs, her grandfather's portrait is progressively obscured by a mushroom that, with each frame, grows larger and more insistent. As the title of the poem, "Watching It Grow between Your Legs," suggests, the series symbolically represents her grandfather's violence. But the resulting photographs also give Randall power, as she exposes the cover of her grandfather's carefully controlled pose by "defacing" his image. In the passage quoted above, she describes *seeing* the objects as itself a form of action; her relationship with her grandfather is conjured up by the shifting of her focus from one photographic image to another—an activity that is further emphasized by focusing the lens of the camera. Through the physical process of focusing and then shooting, Randall finds herself experiencing another bodily sensation—her mouth filling with saliva—that brings back the memory of what her grandfather did to her. But the details of the event itself are figuratively, not literally, represented in the photographs. More important than the details of what her grandfather did may be the bodily memory of her own physical sensations. Her photographs serve as a record of an emotional and physical process, but not as a narrative of an event.

Randall's account of her therapeutic process, which is significantly recorded not just in words but in images (and in images that are not just representations but objects), serves as a reminder that the memories retrieved in order to heal from trauma are not just memories of what happened in any simple sense. For "what happened" includes the mental, physical, and emotional responses of the

person who experiences trauma, which is thus located inside, as well as outside, the self. A growing body of research on trauma reveals traumatic response to be a complex and even paradoxical process because it includes not only "hyperarousal," or states of heightened sensitivity, but "numbness," or states of imperviousness to sensitivity, such as "dissociation." Cathy Caruth observes that trauma challenges conventional understanding of experience because "the greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it" and "immediacy, paradoxically enough, may take the form of belatedness." [33] The obstacle to retrieving the memory of trauma is not necessarily that it has been repressed but that due to dissociation, for example, it was never experienced in the first place. Or given the overwhelming nature of physical and emotional stimuli, the memory of trauma may not give rise to a conventional narrative; it may instead consist of a series of intense and detailed, yet fragmented, psychophysical experiences. Hence, Randall might be able to access memory through her mushroom phobia because the sensation of touch and taste that the mushrooms provoke is quite accurate to her initial experience, even if mushrooms played no part in it.

The peculiarities of traumatic memory must be kept in mind when considering the force of Randall's claims for the politics of memory. Adept at observing the connections between the personal and collective, Randall sees her own loss of memory and her mushroom phobia as linked to the politics that govern Freud's rejection of the seduction theory and other cases of public forgetting:

An oppressive system's most finely honed weapon against a people's self-knowledge is the expert distortion of that people's collective memory. And so Vietnam becomes a page of glory, Three Mile Island a nonevent, and Chernobyl the first devastating nuclear accident in history. . . .

And I inserted within this general sense of memory/nonmemory the incest experience. How Freud prevented generations of women from making contact with our memories, substituting the idea of fantasy for our history of abuse. How in my own case I had "forgotten" my grandfather's incestuous assault, replacing it with the phobia—a fear that blotted out the fearful.

When I first understood this transference, I saw it only as obliteration of real memory, the development of an alternate memory which kept me from making the necessary connections. Then I saw it another way. The phobia became the safeguard of my memory, the place where it could be stored, the memory bank from which I would someday be able to retrieve it, retrieve and deal with it. That someday is now.

I do not think the second explanation negates the first. In some as yet unexplained way, they are complementary. (This Is about Incest, 23–24)

Even as she criticizes Freud, Randall echoes some of his most significant insights about repetition and healing, invoking the same double logic displayed by psychic phenomena such as screen memories, fetish objects, and hysterical symptoms, which at once hide and announce their ostensible referents. That Randall's phobia can function as the safeguard of her memory, not just as the obstacle to it, and moreover that it can be both at once in a way that is "complementary," bears some resemblance to the mechanisms by which, for example, incest and lesbianism can exist in a complementary, not mutually exclusive, relation. The presence of mushrooms in Randall's healing photographs turns the feared object into the locus of memory, silence breaking, and representation. The mushroom, like the sex play of being a top, can resemble the abuser without being it. That a mushroom rather than, say, a testicle speaks about, offers memorial testimony to, the trauma of incest suggests that the forms in which silence is broken are complex—more complex than fact-obsessed therapeutic, legal, and mass cultural institutions bent on confession, sometimes for healing, sometimes for discipline and persecution, would have one believe. By the same token, perhaps, incest narratives

need not say “lesbian” to be talking about lesbianism, just as coming out need not take the form of saying “I am a lesbian.”

Dorothy Allison's Dream of Fire

In an essay titled "Believing in Literature," Dorothy Allison describes the writing of the semiautobiographical *Bastard out of Carolina* as a healing experience. She testifies eloquently to the value of fiction for the telling of shameful truths:

> *That our true stories may be violent, distasteful, painful, stunning, and haunting, I do not doubt. But our true stories will be literature. No one will be able to forget them, and though it will not always make us happy to read of the dark and dangerous places in our lives, the impact of our reality is the best we can ask of our literature.*[34]

Parts of this essay appeared in the *New York Times Book Review* under the title "The Exile's Return: How a Lesbian Novelist Found Her Way into the Mainstream," explaining for that audience how Allison had renewed her faith in mainstream literary institutions after being disillusioned by the lies of a masculinist canon.[35] Exiled by her class and sexuality, Allison uses the notions of truth and literature strategically in order to challenge potentially hostile or indifferent readers to accept stories about "full, nasty, complicated lives" because they are true. Since *Bastard out of Carolina* is a novel, one should not be too quick to assume that she means truth in any simple sense.[36]

Like Randall, Allison chooses not to articulate the explicit details of sexual violence in *Bastard out of Carolina*. In an interview with Amber Hollibaugh, she says, "I wanted you to know that kid's rage, shame and confusion, but I didn't even want you to know how he put his dick in."[37] The novel's ultimate concern is not the twelve-year-old Bone's sexual and physical violation by her stepfather, Daddy Glen, but "the complicated, painful story of how my mama had, and had not, saved me as a girl."[38] For example, the novel might seem to reach its climax at the moment of most extreme physical violence, when Daddy Glen beats and rapes Bone because her refusal to live with him is keeping her mother, Anney, from doing so as well. But even more important in this episode is the moment when her rescuing and avenging mother turns away from Bone to comfort Daddy Glen, whom she has just been angrily attacking. Betrayed once more by her mother, Bone relinquishes her. Is it more traumatic for her to experience Daddy Glen's physical violence or to watch her mother comfort him? "I wanted everything to stop, the world to end, anything, but not to lie bleeding while she held him and cried. I looked up into the white sky going gray. The first stars would come out as the sky darkened. I wanted to see that, the darkness and the stars."[39] Trauma need not be the response to a physical blow; pain (and escape from it) takes the form of not being there, of watching the "white sky going gray." The novel closes with Bone and Anney taking leave of one another—another moment charged with the emotional ambiguity of Bone's love and renunciation. Here, as in the rest of the novel, the question of agency is complex. Their separation is as much the product of Bone's own choosing as it is one of betrayal and abandonment. By focusing on the mother-daughter relationship, Allison refuses easy dichotomies of victim and perpetrator and explores the complexities of emotional trauma. Transforming the melodramatic narrative structure that would locate the event of sexual abuse as the scene of violence, Allison weaves a much more complicated narrative of family and social structures, where loss and betrayal are not punctual events.

Attuned to the ambivalent mix of love and hatred that Bone feels for her mother, Allison's novel also powerfully examines the intimate connections between sexual trauma and sexual pleasure, and by implication the connections between incest and, if not lesbianism explicitly, then, perverse sexuality. At a number of strategically placed instances, the narrative chronicles how Bone's masturbatory pleasure is fueled by fantasies of violation that conjure up the memory of Daddy Glen's first contact

with her. In a moment of retroactive reconstruction prompted by her speculations about what her mother and Daddy Glen do in their bedroom, Bone traces the connections between masturbation and the moment when Daddy Glen touched her while her mother gave birth to the son whose death makes him forever angry and in need of the scapegoat that Bone becomes.

Sex. Was that what Daddy Glen had been doing to me in the parking lot? Was it what I had started doing to myself whenever I was alone in the afternoons? I would imagine being tied up and put in a haystack while someone set the dry stale straw ablaze. I would picture it perfectly while rocking on my hand. The daydream was about struggling to get free while the fire burned hotter and closer. I am not sure if I came when the fire reached me or after I had imagined escaping it. But I came. I orgasmed on my hand to the dream of fire. (Bastard out of Carolina, 63)

Acquiring the name "sex" for her experiences after the fact, Bone begins to link masturbation and incest. The excitement of struggling to get free from the fire climaxes in an ambiguous way; she is unsure if escaping the fire or being reached by it coincides with the moment of orgasm, unsure if this is a fantasy about submitting to extinction or triumphing over its threat, particularly since both possibilities are pleasurable. The ambiguity of fantasy, its own kind of pleasure, is accompanied by the certainty of her body's pleasure in orgasm. Indeed, the "dream of fire" articulates the fusion of fear and pleasure, shame and anger, that fuels Bone's queer childhood sexuality.

She later connects masturbation and incest more emphatically in fantasies that feature her as the triumphant victim whose beating is vindicated by a series of witnesses who love her and hate Daddy Glen.

I was ashamed of myself for the things I thought about when I put my hands between my legs, more ashamed for masturbating to the fantasy of being beaten than for being beaten in the first place. I lived in a world of shame. I hid my bruises as if they were evidence of crimes I had committed. I knew I was a sick disgusting person. I couldn't stop my stepfather from beating me, but I was the one who masturbated. I did that, and how could I explain to anyone that I hated being beaten but still masturbated to the story I told myself about it? (112–13)

As the price of sexual agency, Bone must contend with the shamefulness of her beating fantasies.[40] She is unable to disentangle the beating that she hates from the fantasy about it that she loves, and her sense that she is the creator of her fantasy leads her to assume shameful responsibility for being beaten as well. Bone's account of violence does not conform to the demand that victims be passive, innocent, or desexualized in order to be sympathetic. This demand keeps her silent since she cannot tell the truth about being beaten without including her sexual fantasies.

Still, Bone recognizes that the agency that gives rise to her shame is also her salvation:

Yet it was only in my fantasies with people watching me that I was able to defy Daddy Glen. Only there that I had any pride. I loved those fantasies, even though I was sure they were a terrible thing. They had to be; they were self-centered and they made me have shuddering orgasms. In them, I was very special. I was triumphant, important. I was not ashamed. (Bastard out of Carolina, 113)

Out of the pain and shame of being beaten, Bone is able to salvage the pride of pleasure in her fantasies and orgasms. To call these fantasies masochistic in a simply derogatory sense, or to consider them the "perverse" product of sexual violence, is to underestimate their capacity to provide not only pleasure but power. Although not as self-consciously produced in the name of therapy as Randall's photographs, Bone is able to seek and find solace in the masturbatory repetition of the

violence she has experienced. And like Randall, she acquires power by putting her body in motion—in this case, by rocking on the hand that brings her to orgasm.

Neither wholly a source of shame nor a source of pride, Bone's sexual fantasies are indistinguishably both. The pleasure they produce cannot be separated from the trauma to which they are also connected; to ask for one without the other is to demand that Bone tell her story of violence and leave out her fantasies. Rather than offer a truncated narrative that makes her an innocent victim, she will remain silent. She realizes that her fantasy's "self-centered" power to make her "special" is potentially just as transgressive as the desire for punishment that permits her to be the center of attention. But the shameful fantasy also provides her with the sense of self that is her way out, that gives her the strength, for example, to renounce her mother.

The dream of fire, in fact, quite explicitly serves as a substitute for Bone's mother, daring to articulate the potentially incestuous connection between mother-daughter bonds and sexual desire. Bone does not disclose her family's violence voluntarily. Aunt Raylene's discovery of Bone's bruises wrenches open her carefully protected secrecy. "Things come apart so easily when they have been held together with lies" (248). Bone's silence has been protecting her relationship with her mother, not Daddy Glen, and she lives with the fear that she will be the loser in the triangle if her mother is forced to choose between daughter and husband. At one point in the wake of the revelations, feeling dissatisfied and rejected by her mother's failure to comfort her, she crawls into bed and scrutinizes her memories of violence for the signs of her own guilt. "I fell into shame like a suicide throws herself into a river" (253). Masturbation becomes fused with the dream of comfort that her mother cannot currently provide: "I dreamed I was a baby again, five or younger, leaning against Mama's hip, her hand on my shoulders. She held me and I felt loved. She held me and I knew who I was. When I put my hand down between my legs, it was not a sin. It was like her murmur, like music, like a prayer in the dark" (253). When Bone wakes up and examines the fingers that have given her maternal comfort, she imagines the fire again, "purifying, raging, sweeping through Greenville and clearing the earth" (253). Out of this fantasy comes not only the triumph of vengeful anger but sexual pleasure. "I clamped my teeth and rocked, seeing the blaze in my head, haystacks burning and nowhere to run, people falling behind and the flames coming on, my own body pinned down and the fire roaring closer. . . . I rocked and rocked, and orgasmed on my hand to the dream of fire" (253–54). Destroyed and destroying, carried away by anger and pleasure, Bone uses the fantasy that comes from emotional need to counter it. But in order to possess this power, she must be unafraid to make her own painful experience the source of agency and pleasure. The emotional complexity of Bone's fantasies is matched by the passionate ambivalence she feels for her mother, the expression of which does not fit neat models of blame and responsibility.

Although Allison explores the productive relation between incest and sexual pleasure, as in Randall's healing process, the place of lesbianism in *Bastard out of Carolina* is left tantalizingly vague. Breaking off before Bone's development to adulthood, the novel leaves her in the care of her aunt, whose lesbianism is revealed only in the final pages of the novel, providing a partial explanation for her "queer" tendencies toward isolation and unmarriedness. As a role model and mother figure for Bone, recently separated from her natural mother, Aunt Raylene seems to function as a displaced marker of Bone's queer sexuality, if not her incipient lesbianism. And she represents both the network of women family members and the community of lesbians that Allison has elsewhere credited with enabling her own survival and development. By making the aunt a lesbian, Allison asserts a continuity between birth families and queer families, so that, as in her own life, whatever strength Bone acquires emerges from her working-class origins, not in spite of them. And those

origins include a mother who both loves and abandons her, precluding any easy assumptions that relations between women provide protection against violence. Allison stops short of the autobiographical connection that would explore lesbianism's presence in Bone's queer sexuality, perhaps out of fear of the dangers of linking incest and lesbianism. But *Bastard out of Carolina*'s vagueness about Bone's future sexuality and Raylene's past enables other "queer" possibilities, including a narrative in which sexuality is only one variable among many, most significantly class, that produce identity.

Memoir and Performance

One of the hazards of working on a recently published text is that its meaning shifts in the context of its reception. I knew *Bastard out of Carolina* was a special book because it changed the shape of this project, providing the story for which I had, until then, been searching in vain. But when I first wrote about it, I had no idea that it would rapidly become one of the most prominent, canonical even, texts in the incest archive. It has been enthusiastically received not only by gay and lesbian but also by mainstream publics, making Allison one of the most visible and successful contemporary lesbian writers.[41] What I had seen as a challenging and uncompromising representation of incest is apparently also accessible to many audiences, including those who know very little about sex-radical lesbian cultures. There is ample reason to celebrate Allison's success, since despite the fact that lesbianism has had its moment of "chic" in the 1990s, only a handful of lesbian artists have benefited directly or economically from this increased visibility. Allison's move from small lesbian publishing networks to major presses and her ability to earn a living wage from her writing are notable. It certainly helps that she can be promoted as a southern writer and that her dedication to telling the truth about her own life accords with the popularity of memoir and confessional; although she resists stereotypical and reductive versions of those categories, the publicity machinery can still accommodate her within them. But her queerness and lesbianism along with her fierce pride in her working-class identity remain uncompromisingly present in her work, making her crossover success a significant accomplishment.[42]

A telling example of the mainstream visibility of Allison's work is the 1996 film adaptation of *Bastard out of Carolina*. Given a high profile because it was directed by Anjelica Huston, the film was rejected as too controversial by its initial producer, Ted Turner's TNT network, and was finally aired on the Showtime channel. Although the translation of *Bastard out of Carolina* into the televisual medium gives it a far wider audience, what is most important to me doesn't make it to the screen version. Gone are the masturbation and fantasy scenes as well as Bone's nastiness and anger. There is no exploding Shannon Pearl, the girl whose relationship with Bone is laced with the competitiveness and meanness of little girls' friendships. And gone, too, is the ambiguity and complexity of Bone's relation to her mother; both Bone and Anney appear much more as the helpless victims of the angry and violent Daddy Glen. The focus on explicit representations of sex and violence as the index of radicalism can be deceptive (especially since the rape scene and the scene in which Bone is in the car with Daddy Glen are not notably explicit compared to most television); the domestication of Allison's work takes subtler forms. Allison herself has been diplomatic about the adaptation, keeping a distance from it yet not overtly criticizing it.

The best follow-up to *Bastard out of Carolina* has been Allison's own work, especially *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, which turns from fiction to memoir in search of a way to talk about a question that also haunts and motivates the earlier novel. "Two or three things I know for sure, but none of them is why a man would rape a child, why a man would beat a child."[43] Along with exploring Allison's family history, *Two or Three Things* is also about storytelling as a mode of survival and resistance, and one specific to her white, working-class, southern origins. The oral refrain "two or three things I know for sure" insistently connects the stories, articulating the complex and unpredictable relation of storytelling to truth. Allison's Aunt Dot says, "Lord, girl, there's only two or three things I know for sure. . . . Of course it's never the same things, and I'm never as sure as I'd like to be" (5). But it is this very uncertainty of storytelling that makes it so attractive to Allison; she inherits from her aunt, her mother, and the other women in her family a creativity that is a precious

resource in lives filled with violence and disempowerment. "I'm a storyteller. I'll work to make you believe me. Throw in some real stuff, change a few details, add the certainty of outrage. I know the use of fiction in a world of hard truth, the way fiction can be a harder piece of truth" (3).

For those who might have wondered about *Bastard out of Carolina*'s connections to lesbian culture, the more overt lesbianism of *Two or Three Things*, including the story of Allison's entry into lesbian culture, struggles with various lovers, and eventual long-term relationship and parenting, provides some answers. But the connections between her violent childhood and adult life are not easy to make.

> *Two or three things I know, but this is the one I am not supposed to talk about, how it comes together—sex and violence, love and hatred. I'm not ever supposed to put together the two halves of my life—the man who walked across my childhood and the life I have made for myself. I am not supposed to talk about hating that man when I grew up to be a lesbian, a dyke, stubborn, competitive and purposely lustful. (45)*

Allison is not afraid to tackle the taboo connections between lesbianism and incest that her story conjures. Describing an encounter with a shrink who voices this fear, she responds by saying that if incest caused lesbianism, there would be a lot more lesbians. In her passionate humor, she dares to say, mimicking her Aunt Dot,

> *If people really believed that rape made lesbians, and brutal fathers made dykes, wouldn't they be more eager to do something about it? What's that old Marxist strategy—sharpen the contradiction until even the proletariat sees where the future lies? We could whack them with contradictions, use their bad instincts against their worse. Scare them into changing what they haven't even thought about before. (46)*

Allison's irreverence enrages and silences her therapist, who "opened her mouth like a fish caught on a razor-sharp line" (46). Although she herself knows that the joke is not really a joke, she also shows a willingness to challenge the domestications of therapeutic culture, to write and speak her way into something far more dangerous and complicated.

Thus, she is honest about how her relationships with her lesbian lovers have sometimes repeated the violence and self-destructiveness that she has seen in the women of her family with their men. She is brave enough to say the following of her sexual experiences:

> *I knew that the things I was not supposed to say were also the things I did not want to think about. I knew the first time I made love with a woman that I could cry but I must not say why. I cried because she smelled like him, the memory of him, sweaty and urgent, and she must not know it was not her touch that made me cry. . . . I'm not supposed to talk about how long it took me to wash him out of my body—how many targets I shot, how many women I slept with, how many times I sat up till dawn wondering if it would ever change, if I would ever change. (48)*

Allison opens up a terrain of the unsaid that goes beyond the act of incest itself to the psychic complexity of an aftermath that includes flashbacks along with the commingling of "desire and hatred." Amid a proliferation of confessional stories and a culture that consumes them voyeuristically, Allison suggests that there are stories that have not yet been told or heard because they are too disturbing. She is not interested in a love that avoids aggression or sex that is sweet and pretty. "I told her, Don't touch me that way. Don't come at me with that sour-cream smile. . . . Take me like a turtle whose shell must be cracked, whose heart is ice, who needs your heat. Love me like a warrior, sweat up to your earlobes and all your hope between your teeth. Love me so I know I am at least as

important as anything you have ever wanted" (66). Like the writers on butch-femme explored in the last chapter, Allison finds her way to vulnerability through a passion that risks violence in order to disrupt her defenses.

She learned to resist by shooting guns and then taking up self-defense, embracing, like Tribe 8, the liberatory power of violence. The same might be said about Allison's approach to the act of storytelling itself.

> *I tell my stories louder all the time: mean and ugly stories; funny, almost bitter stories; passionate, desperate stories—all of them have to be told in order not to tell the one the world wants, the story of us broken, the story of us never laughing out loud, never learning to enjoy sex, never being able to love or trust love again, the story in which all that survives is the flesh. That is not my story. I tell all the others so as not to have to tell that one. (71–72)*

Two or Three Things was originally presented as a performance, and Allison's public reading enables her to use the southern oral traditions that are the inspiration for her writing; her delivery is passionate, with an affective power so intense as to be violent, as she touches her listeners with her voice and feelings. Linking her training in karate to her oral performances, she says that back injuries forced her to give up the martial art, but that "these days I go to strange places, cities I've never been, stand up in public, in front of strangers, assume the position, open my mouth, and tell stories" (90). The physicality of Allison's delivery articulates not just the story but the feelings attached to it and testifies to her embodied survival. [44] *Two or Three Things* moves beyond the more privatized confines of fiction, using the embodied act of performance to create a connection between storyteller and audience that constitutes a public sphere around trauma.

Two or Three Things thus differs generically from *Bastard out of Carolina* not just as memoir but as performance. Allison's commitment to storytelling as emotional rather than literal truth applies to both, thereby undoing conventional distinctions between fiction and nonfiction. "The story of what happened, or what did not happen but should have—that story can become a curtain drawn shut, a piece of insulation, a disguise, a razor, a tool that changes every time it is used and sometimes becomes something other than we intended. The story becomes the thing needed" (*Two or Three Things*, 3). Allison tells stories in the absence of representations of the poor, the queer, the violated, answering to the need for a voice that names survival without shame. Her stories are performative; they seek to do something, not merely to name or represent, and thus as performances, they are able to enact this necessary transformation. Even the photographs that add to Allison's printed text are vehicles for the performance of story; they are not literal documents since she often doesn't even know the names of the family members depicted in the photographs that her mother saves. "The faces in Mama's box were full of stories—ongoing tragedies, great novels, secrets and mysteries and longings no one would ever know" (17). Allison's ability to tell stories brings this emotional archive to life. Like Randall's photographs, Allison's family photos are a way to access memory and are important as affective documents, not realistic ones. Without Allison's stories, the page of photographs from her childhood that is inserted between those that discuss the rape of a child would remain opaque. The family snapshots of smiling sisters don't tell the story of the written and spoken text; in the disjunction between them lies the power of Allison's performing and performative voice.[45] Even when writing in the ostensibly nonfictional genre of memoir, Allison insists on the craft of story as an emotional event, and she forges new ground by writing incest narratives that combine love and hate, and that include lesbianism and sexual desire without purging them of queerness.

Beyond the Courage to Heal

Cultural genres ranging from fiction and memoir to performance and photography may offer both bolder and subtler representations of sexual trauma than therapy can imagine. But the self-help book is not entirely superseded by these other cultural forms; indeed, it can be transformed by them. Consider, for example, the appearance made by the *The Courage to Heal* in Michelle Tea's memoir of her adventures in the queer punk scene, *The Passionate Mistakes and Intricate Corruption of One Girl in America*.

> *Me and Liz had that book The Courage to Heal. We were obsessed with it, we studied it. You know how people turn to religion in times of crisis. I needed dogma, something solid and sure. There's that whole part of The Courage to Heal that says that maybe you were molested but you blocked it out and that's why you're so fucked up right now. That was our favorite part. Liz would try to convince people they had been molested, going over the checklist at the front of the book: Do you have nightmares Are you afraid of sex Promiscuous Argumentative Overly-Passive? At the time it did explain everything. I mean, everyone's fucked up and men, who can trust them. Who knows what we've been through. Anything was possible with my stepfather's eye at my door. . . . We loved it all except for the section on prostitution which we conveniently ignored.*[46]

Michelle Tea (left) and Sini Anderson (right) hosting the Sister Spit performance at the 2000 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. In the background are (left to right) JacquiWoodson (obscured), Sara Seinberg, Kinnie Starr,Marci Blackman, and Lynn Breedlove. Photo by Diane Butler. Courtesy of WWTMC.

Better than any reception study, Tea's narrative captures the tremendous power of books like *The Courage to Heal* to answer the needs of their readers and reach a wide range of readers—even punk dykes working as hookers. Tea quite shrewdly connects memories of sexual abuse with the everyday experience of sexism for which they offer compelling confirmation, at the same time as she affirms the worst suspicions of the advocates of false memory syndrome. Yet even as she is a zealous reader of *The Courage to Heal*, Tea is also a resistant and creative one. Her effort to reconstruct her fantasy

life as part of a "campaign aimed at getting the violence out of our pussies" fails miserably when her pastoral vision of an island of women is interrupted by the image of a gloved man capturing the ladies. And when her girlfriend Liz argues that she can't be the one to support them by turning tricks because she's in the Emergency Stage outlined in *The Courage to Heal* and it would interfere with her healing process, Michelle is forced back into prostitution. Tea's combination of humor and seriousness suggests both the appeal of self-help diagnoses, even in contexts that *The Courage to Heal*'s authors might find horrifying, and the need to make them more accountable to the messy and contradictory realities of sexual experience.

Increasingly, there are other options besides *The Courage to Heal* for readers like Tea. Staci Haines's *The Survivor's Guide to Sex* fulfills my utopian hope for a version of self-help books that can encompass radical lesbian sex.[47] Haines presents herself as both a survivor and therapist, and her approach to healing from sexual abuse draws on and seeks to join two feminist communities that are not often linked: sex-positive communities and incest survivor communities. In addition to having trained at the California Institute for Integral Studies, the center for a range of alternative therapies, Haines has worked at another important locus of San Francisco's new age culture of sex and spirituality: Good Vibrations, the women-run sex store. Moreover, her book had its origins in articles written for *On Our Backs* before it was commissioned by Cleis Press, the independent feminist press that has also published Susie Bright and other sex-positive writers. Despite what might seem to be their tensions, the alternative sex radical world actually crosses over with apparent ease into the more mainstream one of self-help books. *The Survivor's Guide* carries a recommendation from Ellen Bass, coauthor of *The Courage to Heal*, and although it has sections on S/M, sex toys, and anal sex, the book is also written in the familiar idioms of the self-help genre, including exercises for the reader and personal testimony from survivors. Unlike the authors of *The Courage to Heal*, though, Haines is extremely open about her own lesbianism and, even more significantly, the origins of her approach to therapy in sites of lesbian culture such as Good Vibrations, which is not just a store but a community center for sexual publics.[48] Even if, once forged, the links between sex positivity and therapy seem rather obvious, Haines points out that this hybrid was not so easily achieved. In the introduction to *The Survivor's Guide*, she explains that "as a manager at Good Vibrations, however, I found myself caught repeatedly between two worlds: the world of survivors, hurt and at times paranoid about sex, and the world of sex-positive educators, many of whom did not want to hear about the negative uses of sex or the effects of sexual abuse" (xviii).

The remarkable result of bridging these two worlds is that *The Survivor's Guide* can actually explore S/M and other controversial sexual practices as ways of working through sexual abuse. Not only does Haines refrain from casting S/M cultures as other or different (and she makes clear that S/M is not just an individual idiosyncrasy but a public sex culture); she also invokes the model of a continuum that links S/M with lesbianism and female sexuality more generally in order to make a powerful argument not merely for tolerating S/M but for understanding it. "Some people will tell you S/M is abusive, perverted, or wrong—in short, a "bad" way to express your eroticism. Many of the arguments used against people who eroticize power play are the same ones that are used against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. And these same arguments have been used against women who have wanted to empower themselves sexually, and against sex itself " (191). On the question of whether S/M constitutes acting out or not, she says, "My answer is both yes and no, depending" (193). She thus does not feel obliged to disavow this possibility and directs attention away from the question of whether those practicing S/M are acting out abuse in favor of considering whether they're doing so in a way that is healing. As such, acting out is not automatically associated with retraumatization— a

crucial conceptual separation. Haines consistently mentions that the same hazards that emerge in S/M are also present in "vanilla" sex, especially checking out or dissociation, which for her is a much better index of a sexual problem than the presence of violence or pain. In addition to providing survivors with tools for overcoming sexual difficulties, then, *The Survivor's Guide* offers an important pitch for the resources offered by alternative sex cultures such as S/M communities. "Innovation usually happens in the margins and then makes its way into the mainstream. No matter what your position on S/M, what we can appreciate about edgy practices is that they challenge us to take our imaginations further out than what might make us comfortable" (194).

Also notable in Haines's approach is her discussion of triggers as a mechanism for healing. A persistent conundrum about the distinction between acting out and working through, and between repetition as retraumatization and repetition as cure, is handled in a novel way. Rather than seeing triggers as repetition that is bad, she advocates "embracing" them "as signposts to what is in need of healing" (154). They offer the chance to explore the sensations and feelings associated with abusive events in order to construct change. Avoiding triggers can cause them to become even more psychically charged. Instead, Haines recommends actually experiencing the trigger, which can be a challenge because it tends to produce dissociation. Once fully inside the experience, it is possible to experiment with different responses. The goal is to use the trigger to release emotion.

Haines's emphasis on staying present or not dissociating, the fundamental ground for her discussion of both sex and therapy, stems from her interest in somatic forms of therapy. These methods stress the body's sensations in contrast to the act of telling a story promoted in talk therapy; she outlines practical exercises designed to practice and achieve what she calls "self-referentiality" (193), the grounding of experience in one's own desires rather than external messages. Haines shares with theorists of trauma an emphasis on the problem of dissociation, but she advocates retraining the body as opposed to constructing memories or stories. Emotion is understood to be physically located and so requires translation into the language of the mind. Even a simple question such as "What am I feeling right now?" may be difficult to answer, especially for the trauma survivor. Haines's work represents a dramatic shift from the discursive focus of many therapeutic traditions, including psychoanalytic ones. And it is no accident that sexuality plays a key role not only as an end in itself but as an activity in and through which traumatic emotional and bodily response can be triggered and healed. Just as significant as somatic therapies, many of which are outside the mainstream of clinical psychology, is the influence on Haines's work of the insights of alternative sexual publics, including lesbian ones.

At the same time as *The Survivor's Guide to Sex* is radical in its assumptions and directions, it is also very much a self-help book. In distinguishing it from other examples of the genre, especially *The Courage to Heal*, I am not seeking to dismiss the genre; instead, I'm interested in how a different approach to sexuality could dramatically alter, rather than replace, therapy. The contributions of queer and lesbian sex cultures to this work suggest what can happen when therapy is open to other public cultures that can inform its work. The self-help genre, including not just the book but the workshops that Haines conducts, are quite adaptable. Haines's use of therapy's reassurances that it's normal or okay to experience certain kinds of feelings and desires takes on a queer resonance when applied to S/M and other practices. In a city like San Francisco, the worlds of alternative therapy and alternative sex are not so different, but Haines incorporates this hybrid within a genre, the self-help book, that has often seemed incapable of such complexity.

Sexual Trauma and Queer Nations

In both Allison's and Randall's cases, sexual trauma opens onto those of national identity, producing something like the links between the private and public that motivate Judith Herman's argument for connecting the feminine world of sexual trauma with the masculine one of war trauma, but doing so in ways unanticipated by her equation of different kinds of trauma.[49] Randall's memories of incest are triggered by her 1984 return to the United States, where she tries to reclaim the citizenship she gave up in the 1960s to become a Mexican citizen. In order to come "home" to the United States, she must assert her claim to a nation that wishes to disinherit her and a family that includes the grandfather who molested her as a child.

Not an "alien" but a "bastard," Allison's Bone is also disenfranchised by the official institutions of the state, registered as "illegitimate" in the county courthouse that holds her birth certificate. More than merely a private sexual or family matter, her illegitimate status becomes the sign of southern white trash culture's backwardness. The specter of causality that haunts discussions of incest and lesbianism is no less problematic when it comes to class, one of the crucial elements, along with race and region, of the queer category *white trash*. *Bastard out of Carolina* contends with the "culture of poverty" argument that holds white trash culture capable of producing only "bastards," of passing down violence and deprivation as though they were genetic conditions. Allison delineates the complex interdependence of sexuality with class and race, illuminating the mechanisms by which men beat women in response to economic hardship, or by which white working-class families obsessively assert their difference from African Americans or Native Americans through vigilant attention to bloodlines.

Sexual violence in *Bastard out of Carolina* produces not just a particular ("queer") sexual identity but in an equally risky move, a particular, and proudly queer, national and regional one. Bone loses a family that is already lost, marked by class as only marginally "American" because white trash is a marker of southern regionality and hence subnational identity. In showing how Bone claims a sexual self out of her history of violence, Allison also claims the value of white trash origins; she claims as legitimately American literature the story of a "bastard out of Carolina." In work such as *Trash* and *Skin*, Allison explores the lesbian identity that she assumes only queerly because of her working-class background as well as her politically incorrect sexual fantasies and desires.[50] She refuses to relinquish her "white trash" culture, even if to some it is not a culture at all, and she looks to it for the materials from which to craft a story, much as Bone makes use of the hook she salvages from the "trash" in the river. But in legitimating the bastard or making literature out of trash, she never effaces its violence or messiness. In order to write about her regional or national identity, she must write about sexual violence.

Randall returns to the United States as a dissenting American, claiming the birthright that the ins forbids her, and like Allison, claiming it in spite of the fact that it has brought harm. Her grandfather's betrayal is only part of the U.S. culture of lies that Randall, living variously in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Mexico, has spent much of her adult life combating. She nevertheless insists on her citizenship in the United States, reserving the right to occupy it on her own terms. These queer nationals maintain that sexual and political "deviancy" does not prevent them from having either families or countries. They are American, even when Communists, lesbians, or white trash, and regardless of how perverse their fantasies and fears might be. Their sexual stories are also national ones, but stories whose impact on the nation is traumatic and should be welcomed as such.

The national dimensions of work like Randall's and Allison's also point to another reason why the

connections between lesbianism and incest are not likely to be direct. Both present sexuality as encompassing much more than the gender of one's object choice. Through a queer sexuality, through mushrooms and dreams of fire, and through homes forged from within corrupt nations, they perversely find ways to heal. Perhaps one can live with the queer interdependence of that which harms and that which heals in order to embrace the unpredictable potential of traumatic experience. I connect lesbianism and incest in order to suggest the queer contributions they make, not least in their conjunction, to notions of trauma and healing. But they do so as complications rather than solutions or ready-made transformations. For both Allison and Randall, trauma is a far from straightforward experience, and no simple prescription, whether therapeutic or political, or both, can heal it.

4 Transnational Trauma and Queer Diasporic Publics

In *We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress like This?* Achy Obejas tells the semiautobiographical story of coming by boat from Cuba to the United States in 1963. The narrative of her family's encounter with the ins as they apply for political asylum is interwoven with the subsequent history of the conflict between the narrator's lesbian life and her parent's ambitions for her. But it's also a story about a sweater. Because "there are things that can't be told . . . things like when we couldn't find an apartment . . . things like my doing very poorly on an IQ test because I didn't speak English, . . . like my father, finally realizing he wasn't going to go back to Cuba anytime soon, trying to hang himself with the light cord in the bathroom while my mother cleaned rooms at a nearby luxury hotel, but falling instead and breaking his arm," and other painful memories that the narrator only lists but doesn't elaborate, she begins with a sweater. "I'm wearing a green sweater. It's made of some synthetic material, and it's mine. I've been wearing it for two days straight and have no plans to take it off right now."[1] Years later, her mother sends her the same sweater wrapped around mementos of immigration—her Cuban passport, the asylum papers, family photos from Cuba. The fetishization of objects can be one way of negotiating the cultural dislocation produced by immigration, and the sweater that the young girl in the story was wearing when her family was processed by the ins is the material sign of her fear and incomprehension, which might otherwise be invisible or forgotten.

Obejas's story records the trauma of abrupt dislocation, which can produce especially acute feelings of loss for Cuban exiles because of the difficulty of returning home. Her narrative includes not only the punctual events of arrival and departure but also the ongoing challenges of acquiring a new culture and a new language. Like Carmelita Tropicana's attempt to remember her life in Cuba in *Milk of Amnesia*, Obejas's individual experience is also collective and transhistorical, drawing in its wake the history of the Cuban Revolution along with its preceding histories of colonization and exploitation. Glasses of milk and sweaters tell these larger stories, conjuring the everyday affective experiences that are the structures within which traumatic transnational histories are lived. In exploring the links between trauma and migration, I seek to expand the affective vocabulary of migration and to move beyond narratives of assimilation or national belonging that demand feelings of unambivalent patriotism or that restrict the language of loss to sentimental forms of nostalgia.

My larger aim is to suggest how trauma studies can participate in the large and interdisciplinary project of producing revisionist and critical counterhistories. A trauma history of the United States,

for example, would address the multigenerational legacies of the colonization and genocide of indigenous peoples as well as the African diaspora and slave trade—a project, it should be noted, that is necessarily transnational in scope. These multigenerational histories have not been prominent within trauma studies, which has yet to address fully the categories of race and ethnicity. This failure is due in part to a lack of attention to race within psychoanalysis and clinical psychology more generally, although there is now a growing body of work in this area.[2] Moreover, within different area studies, ambivalence about psychoanalytic discourse and its pathologizing uses has sometimes created a reluctant reception for discourses of trauma. At the same time, even without overt reference to trauma studies, ethnic studies has dedicated itself to investigating traumatic histories, although these efforts are sometimes fraught with the difficulty of acknowledging the traumatic past without being defeated by it. There is a need for trauma studies to focus on race in a way that opens up the field to new approaches and theories. The emphasis would be on collective rather than individual trauma and on the long-term effects of trauma across the generations, effects that include a range of affective experiences not confined to any narrow definition of traumatic symptoms. The intersection of race and trauma studies would also include investigations of the impact of cultural loss and the suppression of cultural memory on the work of building culture in the present. Especially important is the interventionist potential of trauma histories to disrupt celebratory accounts of the nation that ignore or repress the violence and exclusions that are so often the foundation of the nation-state.

Such a wide-ranging project is well beyond the scope of any one book. My own, more modest goal is to explore migration as one strand of a larger "American" trauma history. I'm particularly interested in migration because it has been less prominent within American studies than the foundational violences of slavery and the colonization of indigenous peoples (although forced migration is, of course, central to both of those histories). I'm building on work such as Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts*, which looks at the centrality of both immigration and Asian American history to U.S. culture and establishes a model for a racial history that is multidimensional. (There's also a queer dimension to my interest in migration, a predilection for stories that don't claim to be central or representative but that may nonetheless be revealing or symptomatic.)

The presence of geographic dislocation in a range of trauma histories suggests the intersections of trauma and migration. For example, the trains to the concentration camps play a significant role in Holocaust testimony and memorial, and have additional resonance in the context of Jewish diaspora. Ships figure prominently in the production of cultural memory about the Middle Passage, the traumatic process of transport from Africa to the Americas. The refugee communities frequently created by war and other forms of political violence add displacement and the loss of home to the list of casualties. More generally, migration is also key to the traumatic histories of domination and exploitation that form the story of transnational capitalism. The contemporary processes of globalization that are receiving so much critical attention are part of a much longer history of empires that have depended on and produced a range of migrations, including the vast importation of labor for industrialization as well as the displacements of people in the wake of struggles for power, resources, and national borders.[3] As both a national and transnational category, trauma is present in the counterhistories and counterarchives that chart the way in which national and global histories are created; it is part of the documents of civilization that are also documents of barbarism. An exploration of the intersections of migration and trauma is thus consonant with the critiques of nationalism and globalization that have emerged in discourses of transnationalism and diaspora.

A multiethnic trauma history of the United States also demands attention to queer sexualities, which are another vantage point from which to articulate revisionist histories. As a resource for this inquiry,

I turn to the extraordinarily rich and productive intersections of work on transnationalism and diaspora and work on queerness and sexuality. There is a growing body of scholarship in this area, including Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler's collection *Queer Diasporas*, the special issue of *GLQ* on "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally," and explorations of queer diasporic publics in Asian American and South Asian contexts by David Eng, Gayatri Gopinath, and Martin Manalansan.[4] This work has had the important benefit of moving gay and lesbian studies beyond its location in metropolitan centers and the United States, and embedding categories of sexuality and sexual identity more fully within racial and national contexts. It asserts the necessity of going beyond gay and lesbian identity politics to consider how (homo)sexualities function in transnational contexts. And it considers whether queer sexualities can disrupt cultural and state nationalisms that presume and enforce heteronormativity. As Eng and others have pointed out, diasporic social formations do not necessarily challenge nationalisms; in some cases, cultural nationalisms are articulated through the regulation of sexuality and gender in the name of cultural purity and reproduction. Queer diasporas contain the promise of public cultures that reject national belonging and virulent nationalisms as the condition of possibility for community. Patton and Sánchez-Eppler, for example, envision queer diasporas that move beyond Benedict Anderson's model of imagined community by forging transnational circuits of cultural reception and production.

To this crucial interdisciplinary investigation, I would like to add the project of exploring trauma and affect. Queer theory has taught us to revalue gay and lesbian practices as paradigmatic instances of nonnormative sexualities; it can also help illuminate how immigration produces queer, or nonnormative, versions of national identity and the nation. Migration can traumatize national identity, producing dislocation from or loss of an original home or nation. But if one adopts a queer and depathologizing approach to trauma and refuses the normal as an ideal or real state, the trauma of immigration need not be "healed" by a return to the "natural" nation of origin or assimilation into a new one. Indeed, the concepts of the transnational and diasporic contribute to this perspective as terms for revaluing the state of having multiple homes or being homeless. They stand in contrast to the concept of exile, for example, which frequently presumes a place of natural origin and emphasizes the loss of one's nation as a trauma in the negative sense. Both the fantasy of return to an origin and the desire to assimilate can be strategies for forgetting the trauma of dislocation. The emphasis here, by contrast, is on the possibility that acknowledging traumatic loss can be a resource for creating new cultures.[5]

If new models of diasporic and transnational identity make it possible to refuse the loss of culture imposed by assimilation or the demand for a singular or authentic national identity, these models are of particular consequence for understanding processes of cultural reproduction, which are consistently sexualized. The traumas and anxieties produced by migration frequently generate sexual panics, especially fears about the loss of culture through intermarriage. There's a structural similarity between interracial and homosexual coupling, both of which can be construed as queer forms of cultural reproduction. The desire for "natural" reproduction can be understood as a way of refusing the trauma of cultural dislocation through a fantasy of uninterrupted lineage. As a more obviously recent and invented tradition, gay and lesbian culture can provide alternative models for migrant cultures. When models of sexual reproduction govern those of cultural reproduction, the result can be a heteronormativity in which each generation is expected to produce another like itself. By contrast, gay and lesbian culture emerges from the impure and historically specific structures of capitalism, and through bonds of affect and affiliation that are not biological or natural. Queer or nonnormative forms of cultural reproduction open up possibilities for constructing cultural loss as something other

than traumatic or irretrievable loss. The queer migration stories explored here incorporate traumatic cultural memory as a resource for the construction of new forms of public culture.

What was once merely a hint of the ways the queer could be expanded beyond the sexual to the national in Eve Sedgwick's mention of the productive spins on the concept available by investigating "the fractal intricacies of language, skin, migration, and state" has now become a fullfledged interdisciplinary project.[6] Sedgwick's description of queerness as the "open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" remains central to this project, particularly because her formulation offers a significant corrective to totalizing narratives of globalization, which are remarkably persistent despite a range of critiques of them.[7] Focusing on the traumatic histories that structure migration and hence on the affective experience of migration requires a rejection of a sociological or demographic analysis in favor of more idiosyncratic and subjective points of view. This project calls for new methods and forms of evidence, different from the systemic and global narratives that have been typical of Marxist cultural theory, for example. As Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd observe about the essays in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, it is necessary to "put into relief the relatively autonomous meaning of the singular instance without needing to reinscribe it as a founding moment in an oppositional narrative of emancipation."[8] Individual testimony, trauma's paradigmatic genre, plays a significant role in providing a point of mediation between systemic structures and the lived experience of them. Thus the texts to be discussed here, Frances Negron-Muntaner's film *Brincando el charco*, Pratibha Parmar's film *Khush*, and Shani Mootoo's novel, *Cereus Blooms at Night*, use the individual story to open up new vantage points on national and transnational experience. If they often seem stubbornly individuated and resistant to inclusion within an account of collective experience, then it is important to keep in mind what Patricia Williams has described as the danger of "recasting the general group experience as a fragmented series of specific isolated events rather than a pervasive social phenomenon." [9] Williams remarks that the casting of experience as idiosyncratic, or one might say queer, can itself produce the loss of cultural memory that is so often the result of traumatic history. The queer transnational publics that emerge from the texts explored here militate against this tendency, seeking ways that the idiosyncratic can be understood as typical. They are queer, then, not just because of their focus on non-normative sexualities but because of the critical perspectives afforded by their specificity. That specificity includes their contributions to Latino/a and Asian American studies from the more particular contexts of Puerto Rican and South Asian cultures. I chose my texts partly in order to address these crucial areas within American studies.

In offering a model for Asian American cultural politics, Lowe argues for an archive that includes personal testimony. She says, "Forms of individual and collective narratives are not merely representations disconnected from 'real' political life; nor are these expressions 'transparent' records of histories of struggle. Rather, these forms—life stories, oral histories, histories of community, literature—are crucial media that connect subjects to social relations."[10] The stories analyzed here are part of this archive. They delve into the affective dimensions of family life in order to articulate social relations. These individual stories must be taken seriously as social stories in order to develop an understanding of migration and diaspora that doesn't just demand assimilation, normalization, or stable and singular homes.[11]

Lowering the Cost of Exile: Brincando el charco

Subtitled Portrait of a Puerto Rican, Frances Negrón-Muntaner's 1994 video *Brincando el charco* traces the story of Claudia, played by Negrón-Muntaner, a young lesbian who identifies herself as "part of the three million Puerto Ricans who call the United States their home—although rarely without contradiction": contradiction, because even as Puerto Ricans constitute (along with Mexicans and Cubans) one of the largest groups of Latinos in the United States and have been present long enough that there are multiple generations of U.S.-born Puerto Ricans, they are often still seen within the United States as foreign and other; contradiction because making a home in the United States doesn't necessarily preclude calling Puerto Rico home as well, although Puerto Ricans living in diaspora are not always recognized as belonging in the "home" nation of Puerto Rico;[12] contradiction because, as a lesbian, Claudia is not always welcome in either the United States or Puerto Rico, not even in the homes of those closest to her, such as her family. When the United States annexed Puerto Rico in the Spanish-American War of 1898, its act of imperialist aggression constituted yet another traumatic episode in that nation's history, which includes Spanish colonization, genocide of native peoples, and slavery. Since then, Puerto Rico's complex history of struggles for independence—political, economic, and cultural—and its tightly entwined relation to the United States make up another phase in its transnational trauma history. By claiming that Claudia's story is a portrait of a Puerto Rican even if she is a lesbian or living in the United States, Negrón-Muntaner forges a queer Puerto Rican diaspora that occupies a critical relation to both U.S. and Puerto Rican nationalisms. Embracing contradiction as possibility, Negrón-Muntaner uses Claudia's story to conceptualize transnational trauma in innovative ways.

Brincando el charco associates trauma not only with departure and exile but with the difficulty of return. Claudia is a "voluntary exile," apparently having left Puerto Rico when her father kicked her out of the house for being a lesbian; her use of this phrase is a reminder that exile is a variable category and that sexualities can produce new versions of it.[13] This cataclysmic event is represented through a black-and-white flashback that accentuates its melodramatic power and vivid place in Claudia's memory. The flashback is prompted by the news of her father's death, an event that constitutes the dramatic center of the video's narrative. Claudia's responses to his death are conflicted as she tries to decide whether to go back to Puerto Rico for his funeral in what would be her first visit after seven years away. Ultimately this plotline is left literally suspended; although Claudia does decide to return, *Brincando*'s final image is a still frame of her plane in midair.[14] Claudia's dilemma speaks to Martin Manalansan's discussion of the impact of transnational status on the work of mourning; writing about Filipino communities in the United States, Manalansan describes the emotional complexity of situations in which the illegal or pending immigration status of family members prevents them from returning home for funerals and other rituals for mourning the deaths of loved ones. The pain of separation from a national context becomes intertwined with more literal forms of death and mourning.[15]

By virtue of its focus on sexuality and the sometimes traumatic effects of coming out, *Brincando* represents immigration as a family drama. But clustered around Claudia's narrative are many other people's stories, which are depicted through a dense array of images and visual styles. Negrón-Muntaner combines narrative fiction with documentary, using, for instance, archival footage of Puerto Rican immigration in the 1950s (accompanied by Toni Cade Bambara's voice-over about black and Puerto Rican relations in New York City), footage of the first Gay Pride parade in Puerto Rico in 1991 along with Gay Pride and Puerto Rican Day parades in New York, interviews with many other

Puerto Ricans, and lots of crowd shots from the city streets that Claudia frequently walks. Like so many minoritarian autobiographies, Claudia's specific and personal story is also a collective one. Her insistence on her Puerto Rican identity is strategic— a claim that she is not exceptional by virtue of being a lesbian, living in the United States, or being light skinned.

Brincando's larger goal is to construct a Puerto Rican identity that is transnational, that can embrace histories of diaspora, and that can include differences of skin color, class, location, sexuality, and language. But in order to construct this radically transformed understanding of the nation, Claudia must first be able to lay claim to it. The video opens with footage of a Puerto Rican Day parade in which the flag figures prominently and is accompanied by Claudia's voice-over suggesting that nationalism is a response to trauma: "Puerto Ricans ask to the point of despair who are we; trusting that an answer will bring an end to conflict and turmoil." In the next scene, a stereotypically white gay male magazine editor asks her why she includes, in the portfolio of photographs that will establish her reputation as a "Latina lesbian," a picture of a seemingly straight white man with the Puerto Rican flag. His question, "What does that have to do with you as a lesbian?" is flashed on the screen, like other key phrases in the film, exemplifying the dilemma of those who have "a body with multiple points of contact" and thus end up being excluded from participating in the construction of national identity.

Wanting to claim Puerto Rican identity, but suspicious of those who do so in order to produce a superficial or inadequate healing of the traumas of colonialism and ongoing economic exploitation, or those who are "seduced into seeing us, failing to see anything else," Claudia wants to "look at what escapes the us in nosotros." Although one obvious place to look would be her own lesbian identity, Claudia in fact looks elsewhere. At least as critical as sexuality in *Brincando* is the dynamic of skin color and race, which Negrón-Muntaner foregrounds by looking at a group that, like queers, is a repressed part of the national body: African-looking Puerto Ricans. Since Claudia (that is, Negrón-Muntaner herself) is light skinned, the video shows other dark-skinned Puerto Ricans, especially those living in the United States, who encounter the particular racisms of being excluded by both Puerto Rican and African American communities. One woman describes being viewed with suspicion both by African Americans, who on hearing her speaking Spanish, construct her as "not a sister," and by other Puerto Ricans, who see her as black. Pointing to the history of the African diaspora in Puerto Rico and the tendency to disavow it, Negrón-Muntaner suggests that this history both returns and gets reconfigured in the context of U.S. race relations as Puerto Ricans confront and are confronted by an explicitly African American population whose links to them, as well as to U.S. culture, are vexed.

By way of contextualizing her own migration to the United States, Claudia investigates the history of Puerto Rican immigration. Faced with the difficulty of tracking such minoritarian histories, she gets directed to Toni Cade Bambara, whom a friend recommends as "the high priestess of memory, queen of storytelling, and my own inspiration." Claudia must supplement archival documents with oral history and personal memory in order to unearth this history to which she is connected as she is also connected to the African diaspora. Bambara's voice-over accompanies archival footage of New York's already racialized neighborhoods being transformed by the arrival of Puerto Ricans after Operation Bootstrap's industrialization transformed Puerto Rico's economy and its relation to the United States in the 1950s. She recollects that the newcomers looked like gypsies, but that some of them also "looked like us." These documents and the commentary indicate a counterhistory that would link the African diaspora inaugurated by the slave trade and more recent migrations, differently racialized populations in the Caribbean and United States, and black and Latino groups that are often understood to be different.

Claudia describes herself as follows: "I am a surface where mestizo diasporas display one of their many faces." Indeed, *Brincando* is full of individual faces, whether in Claudia's photos, the many interviews with different Puerto Ricans, or the archival footage. Her statement is one of many that are underscored by appearing on the screen as an intertitle, and it is part of a sequence in the video in which shots of Claudia in the shower are edited together with footage of a Caribbean celebration in Philadelphia. Claudia's white skin and the private space of the shower are incorporated into a public event in which a transnational public is constructed by claiming an African inheritance. Against the tendency of Puerto Ricans, especially light-skinned and elite ones, to disavow their connections to Africa, Claudia aligns herself as yet another of the mestizo descendants of that tradition. She recollects the Spanish phrases that reveal a casual and everyday racism in Puerto Rican culture —"*pelo malo*" (bad hair), "*para mejorar la raza*" (to better the race), "*es negro pero buena gente*" (he's dark but a good person)—and announces that she no longer wants a table at "*la gran familia puertorriqueña*." Independently of the challenges posed by sexuality or lesbianism, Claudia finds Puerto Rican nationalism to be a problematic category. Identifying with the African diaspora enables her to disidentify with one version of Puerto Rican identity and begin to construct another that is not exclusively based on her sexuality. Even when one section of the video examines the invisibility of lesbian sexuality through explicit sexual footage that questions the gaze, it links lesbian invisibility to that of the Puerto Rican immigrant, whether the light-skinned person who looks Anglo or the dark-skinned person who looks like a U.S.-born African American.

Negrón-Muntaner's documentation of these collective dilemmas of national identity is, nonetheless, significantly inflected by her attention to Claudia's personal story and the intimate details of gender and sexuality. An important focus is the domestic scene of Claudia's relationship with her girlfriend Ana. Their relationship is marked by political differences, another way that Negrón-Muntaner wards off generalizations about Puerto Rican lesbians; Ana is a liberal reformist working to elect Latino politicians, and Claudia is suspicious of the value of these political gains, preferring instead to address politics through her cultural work as a photographer. Claudia resents Ana's request that she take pictures at a political rally as assuming that she has nothing better to do as an artist, and Ana finds her indifference to electoral politics naive.

(This page and opposite): Brincando el charco: "I am a surface where mestizo diasporas display one of their many faces."

Especially powerful is the scene in which Ana, who is a New York–born Puerto Rican, recites for Claudia's video camera the story of her decision never to speak Spanish after being teased for her anglicized Spanish by her Puerto Rican cousins on the island. Because the story is on camera in black and white, interrupted by moments of editing static, the apparatus of testimony and the dynamics of representing trauma are foregrounded. This impromptu moment of ethnography, provoked by Claudia's questions about Ana's demographics, is also an intimate one between lovers. Claudia emerges from behind the camera to sit on Ana's lap and encourages her to talk back to her cousins, the "real Puerto Rican jerks." The trauma of national identity is a story that can only be told through an intimate connection between teller and witness.

The most crucial "queer" dimension of *Brincando* is its focus on the traumatic aspects of immigration and corresponding trauma of return. Claudia's own sense of exile is significantly, even if not exclusively, related to her lesbianism, often a controversial reason for exile, as evidenced by battles with the U.S. INS about whether gay identity can be used as grounds for political asylum. A turning point in Claudia's ambivalence about return is provided by the testimony of an HIV+ Puerto Rican gay activist, who offers a "queer" point of identification for Claudia. He explains that he came to the United States to seek medical treatment and has made return visits to Puerto Rico in order to organize AIDS activism. His comments suggest answers to a question that has haunted the video—Is the language of revolution English?—as Claudia struggles with the implications that Puerto Rico is indebted to the United States especially for its models of gay liberation. As she packs to go home, Claudia finds her friend Maritza's earring, an object of sentimental value that triggers nostalgic memories of nights spent in Puerto Rican gay discos. She receives a letter from Maritza accompanied by a video of the 1991 Puerto Rican Gay Pride parade organized by one of the U.S. drag queens who reportedly started Stonewall—a drag queen who barely speaks Spanish. This U.S.-influenced parade is part of a transnational traffic that makes return possible. Her friend proposes that the airbus traffic that brings Puerto Ricans to the United States in seach of jobs, resources, and medicine can be used in reverse and for other purposes, allowing AIDS activists in the United States to organize political events in Puerto Rico.

The trauma of AIDS and its effects on transnational flows of people, information, and activism influences Claudia's own decision about return, as she acknowledges that "my empowerment speaks a Creole tongue." But she also worries about what Gayatri Spivak has called a "nostalgia for lost origins," the way that return depends on and posits an authentic nation based on affective need.[16] Claudia says, "Even when nostalgia looks like a two-minute commercial to attract tourism, there must be a way I can regain this unspeakable part of myself. Even when there's no return, even when I will remain a partial stranger anywhere and everywhere, how can I go back?" Her comment indicates that trauma accompanies not just the rupture of departure and exile but the rupture of return. If the nation is diasporic and transnational, return can never be a simple reunification, and the histories, both collective and personal, that are conjured by return may remain "unspeakable," as trauma so frequently is. Claudia's query, "How can I go back?" is followed by the testimony of another Puerto Rican woman who articulates return as "personal tourism," a trafficking in memory and nostalgia that must live with its uncomfortable resemblance to economies of tourism, but that has affective meaning for those returning to a nation that they sometimes know only through faded personal experience,

secondhand information, or profound ambivalence. [17]

Claudia's slogan is "lower the cost of exile," and even though she remarks that all slogans "sacrifice something," her words do capture the video's ultimate vision of diasporic and transnational publics that through the acknowledgment of trauma, can challenge national identity and forge communities at the same time. *Brincando* highlights the disjunctions—both personal and collective—among different diasporic sites and identities. Its recognition of not just immigration but return to one's so-called home as trauma comes, I think, from its insistence on the personal and sexual, and suggests that a combined focus on trauma and the psychosexual makes a crucial contribution to a queer transnational perspective on national as well as gay and lesbian publics. But *Brincando* is also distinguished by its attention to the traumatic histories that link different groups in the United States and the Americas. Toward the end of the video, footage of the multiracial faces on the streets of a U.S. city are accompanied by intertitles that list the locations and dates marking the history of U.S. imperialisms and aggressions: " 'America' 1492; Africa 1619; Mexico 1846; Puerto Rico/Cuba/Philippines 1898–1899 (busy year); Nicaragua 1912; Dominican Republic 1916; Korea 1950; Vietnam 1954; Grenada 1983; Panama 1989." Negrón-Muntaner suggests that her own history and that of Puerto Ricans in the United States struggling with their relation to both here and there are also part of a broader history of transnational conflict. *Brincando*'s hint of links, though, never slides into a homogenizing multiculturalism; these are connections forged out of specificities, including her own situation as a daughter, girlfriend, and lesbian. *Brincando* documents transnational trauma through Claudia's own struggle and refuses easy solutions that take the form of nationalism, gay/lesbian separatism, or a single home. It shows the links between nationalism's affects and trauma, and searches for new ways of negotiating transnationalism that embrace rather than disavow trauma.

Splicing the Diaspora: Khush

Building queer public cultures is often a fragile enterprise, and doing so in a transnational context presents the additional challenge of surmounting geographic and cultural differences. The success of South Asian queer and gay and lesbian organizing in the last decade is thus quite notable; the results are significant and varied public cultures that include social and political groups, gatherings in clubs and at conferences, newsletters and magazines, and cultural productions in a variety of media.[18] It is a public culture of truly transnational proportions, following in the tracks of British colonialism (and decolonization) and its accompanying South Asian diaspora, and visible in cities such as London, Toronto, Vancouver, San Francisco, and New York as well as New Delhi and Bombay. Not only print culture, the medium of the eighteenth-century public sphere, but film and video, as well as the Internet, link people across disparate geographies, histories, and identities in order to make South Asian queer culture visible as such.[19]

The South Asian case, however, suggests the challenges, if not impossibility, of generalizations about transnational queer culture. As Anannya Bhattacharjee has argued, the term *South Asian* is problematic—a catachresis that while useful, can also obscure differences.[20] The overprivileging and/or hypervisibility of the South Asian diaspora within Euro-American nations can efface the considerable South Asian presence in a range of nations, including the Middle East (Dubai), East Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda), the Caribbean (Trinidad), and Singapore and other parts of Malaysia. Religious differences between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs trouble homogenizing representations of Indian national culture. South Asian queer diasporic public culture reproduces the trajectories of both colonialism and decolonization, as well as the uneven development of globalization, with the result that the locations with the greatest economic and cultural capital often produce the most visible queer cultures. Nowhere is this more evident than in the complex relation between queer South Asian cultures in the diaspora and India itself; diasporic South Asian organizations have inspired organizing in India, thus contributing to the visibility of publics organized around sexual identity there. Through a form of reverse diaspora, South Asians living, and in some cases born and raised, outside of India and Pakistan are reclaiming and remaking the national culture. Moreover, although U.S. sites of South Asian queer culture have been increasingly visible in the last decade, they have strong connections to, and must be understood in the transnational context of, Canadian and British sites, which have a longer history. Overshadowed by other Asian groups in a way that they are not in Canada or Britain, U.S. South Asian publics sometimes occupy an invisible or uncomfortable place within conceptions of Asian American identity. Each of these nuances and variables suggests the hazards of generalizing about South Asian diaspora, much less queer South Asian diaspora.

Hence the value of specific cases such as Pratibha Parmar's film *Khush* and Shani Mootoo's novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*, which demonstrate the evolution of the process by which cultural texts not only represent a transnational queer public life but actually bring it into being. In 1991, Parmar collated images and voices of South Asians in diaspora in order to offer celebratory testimony to a collective culture; by 1996, it was possible for Mootoo to write a novel that explores the traumatic intergenerational effects of colonialism and migration on a fictional Caribbean island far from either India or Britain. Like other publics, as South Asian queer culture flourishes, it becomes more diverse and complex, and celebration can be accompanied by analysis and even internal critique. As well, the anthology and its equivalents give way to more sustained cultural products— short stories become novels, shorts become feature-length films, one-day events become annual festivals—as a more fully

fledged and institutionalized public culture establishes itself. While these developments are to be welcomed, they can also eclipse the collectivity that is more manifest in earlier products that may be less easily preserved or distributed. Cultural texts and their authors provide the foundation for publics, yet they can also be tokenized so that a single work or person substitutes for a range of experiences. It is important to track more ephemeral forms, especially since these are crucial for nurturing communities without much material support or visibility. Thus, both *Khush* and *Cereus Blooms at Night* must be understood as embedded within a larger, though much more ephemeral archive of individual and collective life experiences, political events, and informal social activities.[21] The archive of queer transnational publics, like those of trauma or sexuality, is a problem archive—one that raises questions about how its materials got there and what materials are left out.[22]

Looking back on Parmar's *Khush* a little over a decade later, it is hard to believe that the now flourishing South Asian queer public culture that it anticipated and helped bring into being barely existed when it was made. Initially produced for British television (Channel Four's gay and lesbian series *Out on Tuesday*) in 1991, *Khush* documents the voices of South Asian gays and lesbians, primarily in Britain, but also in India, and constructs South Asian diaspora in terms of gay and lesbian public spheres that link many places. Parmar herself embodies the meanings of transnational and diasporic in a range of ways: of South Asian descent, she was born in Kenya, educated in England, and works not only in Britain but also in the United States. She studied at the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies and has ties to public cultures, such as the Sankofa and Black Audio Film Collectives, whose productions in the 1980s were so influential in forging the notion of a black British culture. She investigates South Asian diaspora culture not only in *Khush* but also in *Sari Red* (1988), which memorializes the death of an Indian woman brutally killed on the street by white racists, *Bhangra Jig*, a lyrical presentation of the hybrid musical cultures of South Asians in Glasgow, and *Flesh and Paper*, a piece about poet Suniti Namjoshi.[23] In addition, her documentary *Reframing AIDS* (1987) added race and gender to a discussion of AIDS at a time when such sophistication was still rare. Especially distinctive of her transnational aesthetic and politics is Parmar's relation to African American culture in works such as *A Place of Rage* (1991), a documentary about June Jordan, Angela Davis, and Alice Walker that offers a perspective on African American culture from the vantage point of someone who is neither American nor African American. And her collaboration with Walker on *Warrior Marks* constitutes a complex affiliation between two women with ties to Africa, but with Parmar the one whose ties as a South Asian are more literal though less publicly visible than that of Walker, the African American. One might even say that the controversies provoked by *Warrior Marks*'s criticism of female genital mutilation could be clarified by paying attention to this unusual collaboration between two lesbians "of color" whose common ground is as unpredictable as the differences between Walker's "womanism" and Parmar's theoretically informed cultural studies background.[24]

Khush foregrounds important, and often unaddressed, questions about the national character of gay and lesbian identities, communities, and publics—Are they American, Western, metropolitan? Are they another sign of the contaminating cultural deterioration produced by immigration and neocolonialism? Or can they be something else, including something South Asian? The documentary constitutes a transnational public sphere by suturing together the testimony of many different people. Stories that might seem to be exceptional or isolated instances emerge as part of a collective that may not exist in a single public space or nation, and Parmar weaves them together with images of collective experience and a materialized public culture, such as the disco scenes accompanied by the

bhangra sound track.

As the word *khush*, which means "ecstatic pleasure" in Urdu, suggests, *Khush* the film is about joy and celebration. It opens with a series of comments in response to the question, "What do I like most about being gay?" there by emphasizing the positive achievements of lives and identities that are also fraught with racism, homophobia, dislocation, sexism, the effects of colonialism, and other traumas, all of which certainly make their mark on the testimony of the film's narrators. As the film proceeds, it is clear that the narrators have forged "queer" lives for themselves out of difficult circumstances as they face the demands of nation and race that structure aspects of sexual life such as marriage traditions. As one of the narrators says, one of the most important aspects of being khush is community, and he and others testify to the tensions created when assuming a gay or lesbian identity requires cutting oneself off from South Asian communities, whether family or other larger group formations. *Khush* strives to enable a vision of South Asian gay and lesbian identity as a collective, not just an individual possibility, and thus to construct South Asian queer diaspora as a public culture.

Khush uses the power of film, and especially film editing, to create a united diaspora, bringing together not just disparate lives but disparate places. The concept of diaspora, implying an ongoing connection to a nation of origin, seems particularly relevant to South Asian immigrants who maintain economic and political ties, especially to India (as indicated by the term NRI — "nonresident Indian"), as well as affective bonds and extended family connections facilitated by frequent travel across national lines. In the film, one hears from Indian citizens who have come to the United States or Britain to study, a Canadian woman who now lives in Britain, and a South Asian living away from the metropole of London in Glasgow.

But especially important in *Khush* is the connection to India itself. In fact, despite its ambition to present a transnational diaspora, the video focuses primarily on South Asian gays and lesbians in Britain and India (although it's also significant that this focus is unannounced since the actual location of the narrators is only implicitly specified). Not addressed by *Khush*'s desire to construct transnational links are differences within and between South Asian publics in Britain, the United States, and Canada; South Asians in non-European countries such as Kenya, Trinidad, or Singapore; or South Asians who are Pakistani, Sikh, or not Hindu Indian. While such differences between narrators may exist, they are not marked. Rather than exploring a de-centered diaspora, *Khush* is more interested in mapping a trajectory from Britain and the United States back to India, culminating in a focus on those who have returned to India after living elsewhere. Close to the end of *Khush*, the narrators who live in India discuss the intersections of histories of colonialism and sexuality in order to construct a specifically South Asian, as opposed to Western, history of homoeroticism and homosexuality. They have a tendency to create an idealized sexual prehistory before the trauma of colonialism brought a fall into homophobia.

In this section of the film, it is striking that so many of the narrators describe themselves as having returned to India after participating in gay and lesbian public cultures in the United States or Britain —that is, outside of India. This is obviously a key group of people to hear from in order to investigate gay and lesbian publics within India, but one wonders whether those who have not left India would have different points of view. The class position of Parmar's narrators is largely unmarked, yet seems implicitly middle class. It is important to remain alert to the ways in which diasporic public cultures, especially those organized around print and film culture, are the product of those who have access to cultural resources, and this class privilege is no less true of gay and lesbian or queer diasporic cultures than it is of straight ones. *Khush* here displays characteristics that have led some cultural critics to question the tendency of South Asian queer diaspora culture to reproduce notions of a

coherent national and sexual identity. Amarpal Dhaliwal, for one, expresses concerns about the dissimulation of a largely Hindu and middle-class diasporic culture as representative of South Asian culture more generally. [25] Jasbir Puar critiques an "overabundance of celebratory discourses on queer subjectivities," taking as one of her examples Parmar's contribution to the anthology A *Lotus of Another Color*, which is the print counterpart to *Khush* in collating the viewpoints of a range of South Asian queers.[26] Puar suggests that diasporic formations become, in fact, globalizing ones in their use of Western models of sexual liberation and visibility, and their failure to grapple adequately with differences within the diaspora. One of the challenges for South Asian diaspora organizing has been to work across class lines that may also be inflected with other kinds of difference.[27]

Despite these criticisms, Parmar's contribution to building a foundation for what must ultimately be a more heterogeneous public culture must be recognized. Moreover, *Khush* remains distinctive, even after it has been superseded by other cultural moments, because of its aesthetic of visual pleasure as well as its use of both Euroamerican and South Asian popular cultures. An important component of *Khush*'s celebratory aesthetic is Parmar's effective use of other kinds of footage besides talking heads to create a mood and forge new forms of documentary. (Her talking heads footage is itself artful; she uses background color and texture to render the shots beautiful to look at.) Among the kinds of scenes used to make South Asian lesbian and gay identity attractive are clips from a Hindi musical, an erotic scene of two women (played by Rita Wolf and Anna Ashby) together, and the performance of Juanito Wadhwani, a Spanish Asian dancer. The film seeks to be itself erotic, not just to be about the erotic. The use of the Hindi movie dramatically emphasizes one of the film's most significant themes: that South Asian culture is itself homoerotic, that gay and lesbian identities are not strictly American. The footage of the dancers doing a Bollywood version of a chorus line makes dramatically clear that Hindi popular culture, while influenced by Hollywood, can outdo it in the use of spectacle. Parmar's appropriation of Hindi musicals, as a sign of a distinctively South Asian culture, constitutes it as a dense hybrid of mass and popular culture, and transnational, national, and regional influences.[28]

Pratibha Parmar's use of footage from Indian popular cinema in Khush.

Parmar intersperses this footage throughout *Khush*, punctuating spoken commentary with sequences that use music and movement to create pleasure. She also combines it with the scenes of the two women in order to stress the continuities between Hindu (homo)sociality and a more explicit erotic relation between women. Especially significant is the superimposition of these images, and the use of the bench as venetian blind to highlight the role of visual pleasure and veiling (an important visual concept in Parmar's work) in the reception of these images. This section of the film underscores one of the narrator's comments about the difficulties of being orientalized as South Asian women in Euroamerican nations. Such care with the visual materials suggests Parmar's power to use the medium of film to create affects of celebration and solidarity. Building on the power of documentary to make the archive of oral history come alive, she also introduces the techniques of film to make an argument. *Khush* is a strongly visual accompaniment to the print genre of the anthology, which has also played a key role in making a South Asian public culture.[29] Both the anthology and the documentary collate shorter pieces and statements, enabling them to stand collectively for an identity and a culture. These cultural products have been crucial to documenting the existence of queer South Asianness as well as the fact that it exists not only as idiosyncratic discrete cases but also as a collective culture.

Another way to open up the heterogeneity of South Asian queer diasporas that is not fully realized by *Khush* would be to investigate the role of trauma in the vision of solidarity and presence produced by cultural forms that establish a public. Even as I am charmed by *Khush*'s vision of a transnational public of South Asian gays and lesbians, and appreciative of the labor of simply representing or

rendering visible as an empirical fact the presence of an actively organized counterpublic of South Asian gays and lesbians, I also want to hear more about differences, ruptures, and disjunctures; I want less celebration and more trauma. They are not mutually exclusive, of course. *Khush*'s emphasis on joy and celebration is strategic, and still includes evidence of much violence, both material and epistemic. There are obviously important political and cultural ends to be obtained through this strategy, and the achievements of *Khush* raise questions about why one would want to pursue a more "traumatic" vision of immigration, diaspora, and queerness.

These questions are in fact answered by South Asian queer public culture itself, which has continued to flourish since Parmar's work in the early 1990s, and as it does so, turns to questions of trauma. Shani Mootoo's novel *Cereus Blooms at Night* is part of a strong cluster of work from Canada, including Deepa Mehta's feature-length film *Fire* and Shyam Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy*.[30] *Cereus Blooms at Night* was first published in 1996 by Press Gang, a small feminist publisher based in Vancouver. It has since been reissued by McClelland and Stewart, one of the largest national presses in Canada, and was published in 1998 by Grove Press in the United States, thus itself migrating to become part of a more transnational public. A notable feature of all these works is that they extend the arguments presented in *Khush* about the existence of a specifically South Asian homoerotic tradition. These South Asians in diaspora locate their stories in the places left behind —*Cereus Blooms at Night* is set on a fictionalized Caribbean island, *Fire* in India, and *Funny Boy* in Sri Lanka—with the agenda in each case of exploring sexualities that are South Asian and queer because they are independent of Euroamerican notions of gay and lesbian identity, and often embedded in South Asian cultural practices.[31] Hence, for example, in *Fire*, two sisters-in-law living in an extended family that includes their husbands, who are brothers, and mother-in-law establish a sexual relationship grounded in the existing intimacies of the household. In *Funny Boy*, the cross-ethnic relationship between a Tamil and a Sinhalese boy reveals the discrepancies created by civil war and the intimacies of the lived proximity between the two groups. Despite their settings, however, migration remains an oblique though structuring presence in the project of reclaiming sexualities in the locations that precede it.

What seems potentially nostalgic in *Khush* takes on a new complexity and concreteness in these works, which in the course of looking at homoerotic relations, also acknowledge their sometimes traumatic stakes and consequences. For instance, although it is resolved in a fantasy finish, *Fire* charts the explosive disruption of the family when the relationship between the two wives is exposed as sexual, and *Funny Boy* scrutinizes its cross-ethnic relationship against the backdrop of the national trauma of civil war in Sri Lanka and the unwilling migrations it provokes. In Mootoo's novel, love between two women ends in forced migration and leaves a daughter to fend for herself.

Cereus Blooms at Night could be considered an incest narrative, the story of Chandin Ramchandin's sexual violence toward his daughters Mala and Asha, but it is much more than that. At its narrative center is a tropical version of a gothic house; Chandin's decaying, yet still present body lies encrypted within its basement, hidden behind a barrier of dirt, tropical bugs, and stench concocted by his eldest daughter, Mala. She has become the eccentric recluse in a haunted house, brewing a mix of cayenne pepper and boiled snails that gives the house its smell, lining the grounds with snail shells to ward off the evil spirits, and letting the lush tropical growth and mold have their way with the dilapidated house. The house contains secrets—not just the secret of Chandin's body but the secret of his violence toward his daughters and Mala's attack on him after he discovers her in the midst of a romantic tryst with her lover and childhood friend, Ambrose, the man she hoped might rescue her from many lonely years of confinement under her father's command. This traumatic moment of violence and rupture lies buried along with Chandin's body, but a gothic house run wild with the tropical growth of a colonized island marks the spot where it occurred. Underlying the secret of father-daughter violence are other histories of violence, including the colonial migrations and exploitations that brought the Ramchandin family from India to this Caribbean island in the first place.

The discovery of Chandin's body is as traumatic as its burial; in fact, it takes place in a scene that

repeats that initial trauma. Ambrose's son, Otoh, who has been acting as his father's emissary by making regular visits to the house to leave food for Mala, tries to make contact with her. A queer he-she, who began life as a girl and has gradually assumed a male identity, Otoh begins to wonder about the mysterious history that has left his father and Mala so inexplicably damaged. He is in search of a trauma story, and the excavation (quite literally) of that trauma has its own aftershocks; Otoh bolts in terror from the sight of Chandin's body, provoking a search of the house that leads to Mala's apprehension and placement in the Paradise Alms House. Otoh and Tyler, the queer nurse who cares for Mala there, are the younger generation who seek to untangle the history of their ancestors—one in which sexual violence becomes intertwined with a traumatic history of colonialism and racism, and generates queer family stories. The house in which Mala cultivates a sanctuary of cereus blooms, snail shells, and fantasy that protects both herself and a trauma history is ultimately destroyed, but the inquiry into her past that leads to this devastation also forges new possibilities for queer transnational histories that can acknowledge trauma.

As in Dorothy Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina*, where the trauma of Bone's abandonment by her mother is in the end more significant than her rape by her stepfather, Mala is left by her mother. But the story of maternal abandonment is even more confusing in*Cereus Blooms at Night* because the mother is driven away not by her relationship with a man but by her sapphic connection to another woman. (I use the term *sapphic* here because the women never overtly identify as lesbian in the novel.) Mala's mother Sarah is in love with her best friend Lavinia, the Anglo girl whom Chandin had hoped to marry, and they flee the island of Lantanacamara, probably for regions north, in order to pursue their relationship. Mala is also subsequently abandoned by her sister Asha, who runs off some years later and is never heard from, and then by Ambrose, who first leaves to study in the Shivering Wetlands, where smart young Asian boys can be upwardly mobile, and following the crisis that leaves Chandin dead, is too afraid to return to the house. Abandonment and loneliness, at least as much as violence, contribute to Mala's traumatized state. Maternal abandonment intertwined with sapphic love makes for an especially complex source of trauma in the novel, preventing any reductive blaming of the father or celebration of transgressive sexuality. Moreover, abandonment in this novel is migration, and Sarah and Lavinia's departure forms part of the intricate web of diasporic migrations that are as much a part of the traumatic history the novel explores as is the story of sexual trauma. Chandin's sexual relations with his daughters are embedded within a system of family relations, which are in turn embedded in the histories of colonialism and diaspora that circulate around and through it.

Mala's story is excavated not only by Otoh's visits to her house but by Tyler, who in taking on the job of caring for her at the Paradise Alms House because no one else will, draws not only on his training abroad but his queer sensibility. Tyler recognizes her as someone who displays the "symptoms of trauma."[32] Mala will not speak, but rather than choosing a medical treatment, Tyler seeks to find out who she is by comforting her, playing with her, and trusting her nonverbal language. Instinctively, Tyler sees that Mala has something to say and that they have something in common. Like Otoh, Tyler, another queer offspring of the island, goes in search of an ancestral colonial past that also turns out to be queer, and he is interested in Mala because he has heard stories about Chandin. Tyler first hears Chandin's name as a boy when he asks his beloved cigarette-smoking Nana a question about incest: "Can your Pappy be your Pappy and your Granpappy at the same time?" (Mootoo 25). Mala's story begins with Chandin's, and Chandin's story begins with his father's migration: "Old man Ramchandin, who was only ever known as Ramchandin, was an indentured field labourer from India" (26). Their lives, filled with hard labor and low social status, are ultimately little improved by

migration, and perhaps even worse, given the pain of cultural displacement. Like many migrant parents, they project their hopes for a better future onto their son:

> *Old man Ramchandin thought about life in the barracks and life in India before his recruitment to Lantanacamara. There was no difference. But by making the long journey across two oceans, he hoped to leave behind, as promised by the recruiter, his inherited karmic destiny as a servant labourer—if not for himself, at least for his son who had been born just before they left India. In Lantanacamara it was easier to slip out of caste. He planned to work hard, save money and educate Chandin out of the fields. (27)*

Chandin is groomed for assimilation through the cultural mobility afforded by education, a luxury that is paid for by his parents' hard work and displaced ambitions. His father's calculations reveal an economy that links the pain of migration and exploitation to a dream for the future: "He had, as usual, whipped himself up a headache with his obsessive predictions of what the state of his finances could be if he and his wife, Janaki, were to work one hour more, or even two hours more per day, so that enough funds might be accrued to send Chandin to a college in the capital, or even abroad to study a profession" (26). Chandin rises to the challenge as the star pupil in Reverend Thoroughly's mission school, accepted even as a member of the reverend's family and given the opportunity to live in his home. He becomes a role model not only for his parents but for the whole community of South Asians in Lantanacamara. As the locus of intense projection, Chandin carries with him the burden of colonial trauma; the hardships of exploitative labor practices, racism, and the loss of home are transmitted across the generations and remain present even for those who seem to have successfully assimilated.[33]

Some forms of assimilation are, however, disallowed, and Chandin is brutally disappointed when the reverend forbids him to court his daughter Lavinia. Significantly, the racism that underlies this prohibition is disavowed through the invocation of an incest taboo; according to the reverend, Chandin and Lavinia cannot marry because they are as brother to sister. When Lavinia is shipped off to the Shivering Wetlands in order to find a husband who will not only be white and English but noncreolized, Chandin is outraged that the "cousin" to whom she becomes engaged is considered an appropriate match despite the blood tie. "Embers of adoration and desire smoldered but what sprang up were flames of anger and self-loathing. He began to hate his looks, the colour of his skin, the texture of his hair, his accent, the barracks, his real parents and at times even the Reverend and his god" (Mootoo 33). Mootoo charts the cultural logic of cross-racial desire, revealing how Chandin's desire for Lavinia sexualizes the racialized affects that are attached to both the intimacies of the body as well as historical and cultural traditions. Even though it is outwardly successful, Chandin's life is also marked by profound disappointment along with a racism that simultaneously urges him toward assimilation and thwarts him in numerous ways. The specter of failed masculinity hangs over him as he struggles to be a man in the face of pressures created by racism, colonialism, migration, and exploitation that converge in his desire for Lavinia. Grudgingly accepting his fate, Chandin marries Sarah, an Indian girl who has also been a favored student in the reverend's mission school.

Resisting her father's plans for her, Lavinia herself also manifests the "perverse" sexualities produced by colonial racisms. Rather than marrying the Anglo cousin who would secure her family's ongoing ties to the Shivering Wetlands and ward off the dangers of creolization, she returns to Lantanacamara to be with her best friend, Sarah, whom Chandin has since married. The two women resume a passionate friendship that takes refuge in the cover of Sarah's marriage, although even as the category of "romantic friendship" seems appropriate to describe their relationship, it also remains

unclassifiable within the categories of Western homosexuality. Because the story is narrated from Mala's and Tyler's points of view, the reader doesn't have direct access to the women's feelings for one another, which thus remain somewhat mysterious. The relationship does appear, though, to be a form of marriage resistance both for Lavinia, who refuses the path prescribed for her by her father, and Sarah, who was Chandin's default choice as a wife. Of course, it is ironic that the woman whom Chandin can't have desires the woman he grudingly married. Mootoo makes it difficult to ignore the overdetermined nature of desire, which is shaped not just by gender and sexuality but by race, class, and nationality. She presents a relationship between women (which might or might not be appropriately called lesbian) formed within the crucible of colonial relations and refuses to idealize it, infusing it instead with ambiguities and ambivalences. (In this respect, it might be compared to the relationship between the two young wives in *Fire*, which is much more romanticized as transcending social circumstances.)

Mootoo's ambivalent treatment of Lavinia and Sarah's relationship is most evident in her presentation of its effects on Mala. Her recognition that her mother and Lavinia are more than just friends is a traumatic one. Mala loves Lavinia's visits to the house; Lavinia brings the gift of the cereus plant, a prominent symbol of resistance in the novel, and she tells her about the domestic protection afforded by snails. But Mala also watches her mother's friendship with Lavinia grow increasingly private, confined to the house, and silent, a matter of gestures not words. Sensing that there is something "concealed," Mala (nicknamed Pohpoh as a child) returns to the house after being sent out to play and sees the two women embrace one another. "Pohpoh's heart leapt when she sawthe tips of Aunt Lavinia's fingers grasping Mama's waist. She understood something in that instant but save for a flash of an image of her father's face in her mind, she had no words to describe what she suddenly realized was their secret" (56). Mala need not have words for what she sees because it has meaning by virtue of being a secret, operating according to what Eve Sedgwick has described as the "epistemology of the closet."[34] The sexually transgressive acquires meaning through a structure of secrecy, and Mala behaves much like a child who keeps the secret of incest from the other parent, thereby linking as this novel will consistently do, homosexuality and incest. Instead of a name for her mother's secret, she conjures the image of her father; the relationship between Sarah and Lavinia is forbidden, and perhaps even lesbian, since it would be seen by Chandin as a threat, and he is equally cuckolded by Sarah, as the wife who loves another, and Lavinia, as the beloved who loves another.

Mala/Pohpoh begins to perpetuate the women's secret, less out of sympathy for their relationship than a desire to avoid the crisis of exposure, taking care that the women are never surprised by her father's return home. Her own response to the relationship is displaced onto her father's imagined response: "She imagined them kissing. She imagined Papa finding them kissing" (Mootoo 57). But Mala's attempts to protect the women from discovery meet with failure when, as she fears, her father finally sees what she sees. On a family outing at the beach, Chandin snaps a photograph of the women that catalyzes a visual process that converts female friendship into lesbianism. "He watched through the lens. In the midst of their laughter and frivolity, he did not fail to see Lavinia place herself behind Mama, and he saw Mama press herself against Lavinia. Through the lens he watched carefully and saw Lavinia's hands rest tenderly on Mama's waist. He saw it all only because, that day, he intended to. And Pohpoh watched him as he did" (58). The photograph is like the flash of traumatic experience or memory, condensing social relations into a single still image that has the power to shock.[35] The exposure of a sexual secret, whether lesbianism or incest, is connected to trauma. Mala is right to fear this moment for although it is in itself relatively undramatic, merely an exchange of gazes and gestures, it sets in motion Lavinia and Sarah's plans to leave the island. Even though Asha and Mala

are supposed to go with them, they are surprised by Ambrose as Mala goes back for one last thing, and the two women leave without the children. In a fit of anger, Chandin destroys all the photographs of the women, but Mala manages to save the one taken at the beach and preserve it as a record of trauma. The photo that records the traumatic moment also becomes the material object that connects her to her departed mother. Serving as a fetish and an affective archive, it produces a fixation on the intimacy between the two women that is part of a larger story of how colonialism and sexuality intersect to produce both love and separation.

"This is how it started." Like the relationship between Lavinia and Sarah, Chandin's sexual relationship with his daughters operates within a densely layered social context. Fearing that the women will return to claim the children, "for the first few weeks after the shattering of his world, he slept in his bed with a child on either side. One night he turned, his back to Asha, and in a fitful, nightmarish sleep, mistook Pohpoh for Sarah" (Mootoo 65). While Chandin's actions are at first unwitting, once conscious of what he is doing, he takes Pohpoh violently. And although the next day he sends the girls away from his bed, he continues to demand that one or the other join him at night. Just as Mala had sought to protect her mother, so now she tries to do the same for Asha, attempting to soothe her father's anger by sleeping with himso that he won't sleep with Asha. The two sisters are caught in their father's traumatized abandonment and anger. The chain of causality is complicated to trace because the motives that produce incest are portrayed in a historically located fashion that verges on sympathy. Perversions and prohibitions of all kinds are linked—Chandin's cross-racial love for Lavinia, Lavinia and Sarah's lesbianism, and Chandin's incestuous relation to his daughters. According to the folk wisdom of the townspeople, Sarah and Chandin are not dissimilar; Mala is "a woman whose father had obviously mistaken her for his wife, and whose mother had obviously mistaken another woman for her husband" (109). Underlying both "mistakes" is the cultural logic of colonialism along with its disruptive effects on family and nation. *Cereus Blooms at Night* remains sensitive to these histories as well as the many queer sexualities and migrations that they create.

Mootoo's novel embeds sexual violence squarely within the context of migration, depicting South Asian diaspora as a crucial background for Chandin's history with Mala, and Sarah and Lavinia's flight from Lantanacamara as central to the Ramchandin family trauma. In its treatment of the latter, furthermore, the novel presents an interpretive challenge, seeming to link lesbianism with the traumatic effects of migration. As Gayatri Gopinath has suggested, *Cereus Blooms at Night* tells the story of the queer colonial subjects who have not left home, exploring a range of possibilities for queer identities and lives in the world of Lantanacamara while also challenging the assumption that queer identities only exist in Euroamerica or through migration.[36] Lantanacamara is filled with people who may not fit rigid notions of gay and lesbian identities but are nonetheless distinctly queer. Tyler is a boy who likes other boys and enjoys dressing as a girl. Otoh was born a girl, but seems to have been transformed into a boy; he is an object of attraction to both genders in Lantanacamara, and after seducing Mala in the guise of his father, develops a relationship with Tyler. In the case of Lavinia and Sarah, the friendship between a married woman and her childhood companion becomes erotic.

Shaped by the specificities of history and geography, sexuality and sexual identity take unpredictable forms in Lantanacamara—forms unfamiliar to those accustomed to the conventions of the Euroamerican metropoles. Moreover, these queer sexualities emerge from the traumas of migration and sexuality, and their links to traumatic history must be acknowledged rather than denied or repudiated. For although Mala's story reveals the terrible aftermath of migrations and the pain experienced by those who are left behind, hers is also a story of creative and queer adaptation to traumatic circumstances. Tyler is right to suggest that Mala may not be as mad as she appears. With

tremendous creativity, she forges a domestic sanctuary in the house that the others have left. Fantasy is one of her most significant resources; she splits in two psychically, becoming the young Pohpoh and the adult Mala who protects her. At the climactic moment when Ambrose's son, Otoh, finally enters the domain of the house to meet Mala, a moment that ultimately leads to the discovery of her father's body and her removal, the narrative has been alternating between Otoh's point of view and Mala's fantasies of escape in the guise of the young Pohpoh.

Mala weaves traumatic memory into a protective fantasy whose creative logic is only reductively described as insane. She entertains herself with fantasies of Pohpoh's childhood adventures, whose relation to her actual experience remains vague. In these fantasy scenarios, Pohpoh leaves the house at night and breaks into other homes, not in order to steal anything but simply to gain a sense of freedom by being able to roam without constraint and without being detected. No longer the child who is controlled by her father, she is the ghost who haunts other people's houses. This fantasy of power and agency wards off the intrusion of traumatic memory. At one point she catches herself in a mirror, and struck by the contrast between her actual appearance and her projected self, "the image of her father about to lower himself on her body charged suddenly, complete with smells and nauseating tastes" (Mootoo 159).

Fantasy also wards off the threat of outside invasion. Through the imaginary figure of Pohpoh, Mala escapes from her house when the police, following Otoh's frightened retreat, enter her domain. The fear of intrusion, though, begins to affect her fantasy, threatening to conjure the memories that she has held at bay. The fantasy Pohpoh is pursued by the police at the same time as Mala's house is invaded by the police. "Fear was breaking her, was unprying her memory. She was reminded of what she usually ignored or commanded herself to forget: her legs being ripped apart, something entering her from down there, entering and then scooping her insides out. Her body remembered" (175). Pohpoh's (and Mala's) ability to live with her father's violent touch and the memory of it has been dependent on the strength of her fantasy, which keeps her from directly experiencing either fear or rage.

> *She had to fight the temptation to indulge in yearning—yearning to have her mother back next to her, to feel her mother hugging her against her breasts with one hand resting on wet cheeks, absorbing Pohpoh's tears. But if she did not stay strong, if she succumbed to her longings, she would not be able to look after Asha. . . . The success of an adventure like the one she was embarking upon depended on the control of all her faculties. Anger, hatred and even fear could very easily trip her up. Pohpoh worked on finding the perfect balance between being rigidly alert and dangerously relaxed. (142–43)*

By splitting herself into the young Pohpoh and rescuing her, Mala becomes the mother that Pohpoh could not have. "She decided that if trouble was indeed on its way her first duty was to save and care for Pohpoh. Hardly anyone, in her estimation, ever cared for Pohpoh. Now that she was grown up, she herself would take care of little Pohpoh" (172).

When she leads the police to her father's decaying body in the basement, Mala also shows Pohpoh what is happening and instructs her about how to escape. In the fantasy, Pohpoh is free to fly away into the sky like a bird. Through this splitting, Mala psychically manages the destruction of her carefully preserved sanctuary, just as she managed her family's destruction years ago; Mootoo's narrative presents her responses as perfectly plausible. As the one who stays in order to ease her father's anger at the mother and protect her sister, she occupies one position among many in a complex web of family and social relations that bear the burdens of colonial histories. Sexual

violence cannot be separated from colonial violence, whose effects also include the violence of families separated by migration and diaspora.

In addition to using fantasy as a form of power, Mala makes the most of the natural landscape of the island she herself never leaves. Two of the novel's central motifs are the cereus bloom, a plant that most people do not value, and the bugs and snails that Mala collects and places around the perimeter of the house to create a circle of protection. Like Michelle Cliff 's image of a grandmother's ruinate house in Jamaica (in *No Telephone to Heaven*) that becomes a symbol of resistance and reverse colonization, Mala cultivates the sanctuary provided by the indigenous life of the island.[37] Mala both masks and amplifies the smells of her father's putrifying body, making special potions of boiled snail shells and peppers that provide a wall of olfactory protection. She shares an appreciation for bugs with Ambrose, who, when he goes to the Shivering Wetlands for his education, rejects the study of theology in favor of entomology because he considers the view that bugs are lower than humans to be a racist ideology. He returns to Lantanacamara as a decolonized subject ready to reoccupy the land as a silk harvester and ecotour guide; Mala, though, has also performed her own version of reverse colonization by cultivating her wild garden. Occupying the pride of place in the yard is the cereus, the queer and secret blossom of the tropics, which blooms only once a year at midnight. To most the cereus plant is ugly, but Mala's flowers bloom on the night that Otoh comes to meet her, offering a sign of her peculiar yet special power and beauty. Of Asha's significance to Mala, Tyler says: "You are, to her, the promise of a cereus-scented breeze on a Paradise night" (Mootoo 249).

Given Mootoo's own multiply diasporic identity as a South Asian born in Ireland, raised in Trinidad, and residing in both Canada and the United States, *Cereus Blooms at Night* quite possibly contains a form of selfcritique. Mootoo's own history might be read not only in the story of Lavinia and Sarah but in the figure of Asha, the lost sister who leaves a family marked by violence and trauma to make a diasporic path from northern Lantanacamara, the fictional Caribbean island that is the setting for the novel, to the Shivering Wetlands (seemingly a fictionalized version of Britain), to Canada. Asha's fate remains unrepresented except through the never delivered letters discovered at the end of the story that reveal her abiding concern for Mala. Through her representation of those who have left Lantanacamara, Mootoo offers a critique of her own position as a diasporic subject.

Another important author surrogate is Tyler, the queer nurse trained abroad who finds in both Lantanacamara and Mala queer fellow travelers. *Cereus Blooms at Night* sustains a multivalent picture of colonial trauma partly through the frame of Tyler's quest for Mala's story. Articulating the position that migration enables queerness, Tyler reckons with his own desire to leave in order to be allowed to be more openly perverse, away from the claustrophobic gaze of island life.

> *Over the years I pondered the gender and sex roles that seemed available to people, and the rules that went with them. After much reflection I have come to discern that my desire to leave the shores of Lantanacamara had much to do with wanting to study abroad, but far more with wanting to be somewhere where my "perversion," which I tried diligently as I could to shake, might be either invisible or of no consequence to people to whom my foreignness was what would be strange. I was preoccupied with trying to understand what was natural and what perverse, and who said so and why. (47–48)*

Sexual desire is intermingled with classed and racialized desires in Tyler's account. Upward mobility provides a conduit for sexual mobility, and the price of both is often an uprooting from one's home and family. Tyler makes the interesting claim that the racism and xenophobia that cast him as "foreign" also offer a cover for queer sexuality. The natural and the strange or perverse apply to

sexuality and nationality equally. Yet rather than suggesting that he acquires a "perverse" sexuality by going away, he maintains that he leaves in order, if not to lose his perversion, at least to render it less obvious. Thus, at the same time as he identifies with those— such as Asha, Lavinia, and Sarah—who have left the island, Tyler feels drawn to Mala by "a shared queerness" (48), and his response to her story is also colored by his sense of sharing the category of pervert with Chandin.

Pondering his Nana's story later, after himself having left Lantanacamara to be trained as a nurse, Tyler is sympathetic to *both* Chandin and Mala, identifying with the cultural contradictions that force difficult and unwilling choices. "I wonder what Nana would think if she knew the positions I was in that enabled me to gain the full story. For there were two: one, a shared queerness with Miss Ramchandin, which gave rise to the other, my proximity to the very Ramchandin Nana herself had known of " (48). Tyler is led to question the motives of those who have abandoned Mala. "I wonder at how many of us, feeling unsafe and unprotected, either end up running far away from everything we know and love, or staying and simply going mad. I have decided today that neither option is more or less noble than the other. They are merely different ways of coping, and we each must cope as best we can" (90). By exploring so extensively the fate of Mala, the one who stayed and went mad, the novel challenges the idea that queerness can only be pursued by escape through migration and diaspora. Moreover, Tyler's sympathy for both Asha and Mala, and for Mala and Chandin, scrambles categories of guilt and blame, implying that all of them are living with traumas of colonialism that are deeply entwined with those of migration and sexual incest. This history marks both those who stay and those who go, who can be simultaneously perpetrators and victims.

Mootoo constructs Lantanacamara, a version of the places left behind, as a scene of both traumatized and queer sexualities. Answering to a need for a South Asian diaspora in which queerness is not merely Euroamerican, Mootoo offers a vision that is neither utopian nor pathological. Instead the sexualities of Sarah, Chandin, Mala, and others, even where in conflict with one another, are represented with an understanding for how they are shaped by familial and colonial histories. And Mootoo finds queer possibilities for working through trauma; in the end, Mala is not destroyed by her traumatic experiences or the invasion of the house in which she preserves them. Nor are Sarah or Chandin blamed for what they have done to their daughter. Queer sexuality is the productive offspring of these perverse unions and dominations—a queer sexuality that can be located in Lantanacamara, Canada, or the Shivering Wetlands equally. Mala's story, which includes the history of her family, is taken up by Otoh and Tyler, who find in her a figure echoing their own queer locations and genders. By writing of trauma without romanticizing or pathologizing either migration or remaining rooted at home, Mootoo creates space for the outcomes of the traumas of dislocation. And she refuses to present a simple picture of homosexuality, transgender identities, and other queer sexualities, which are also neither romanticized nor pathologized. She offers a vision of sexual violence that avoids a narrative of victimhood at the hands of a monolithic patriarchy. By situating sexual trauma in a transnational context, she makes room for a fuller appreciation of the cultures that can emerge around it, blooming like the cereus at night. Mala's trauma story touches Otoh and Tyler in order to contribute to queer diaspora culture that can acknowledge the power of survival as well as the connections between those who migrate and those who stay at home.

Family Secrets

In an interview about the "formation of a diasporic intellectual," Stuart Hall offers an intimate picture of his own history by way of explaining some of the origins of his widely influential writings on diaspora. His account includes what he describes as "a very traumatic experience," the story of how, when he was seventeen, his sister had a nervous breakdown after her parents forbade her romance with a man who was "middle-class, but black."[38] His sister never fully recovered from this crisis (which included her subjection to shock treatments) and spent the rest of her life at home looking after first her father, then her mother, and then a blind brother until each one died. Hall's response was a determination to leave both his family and Jamaica: "It crystallized my feelings about the space I was called into by my family. I was not going to stay there. I was not going to be destroyed by it. I had to get out." He continues by offering the following observations about the significance of this episode:

> *I was suddenly aware of the contradiction of a colonial culture, of how one lives out the colour-class colonial dependency experience and of how it could destroy you, subjectively. I am telling this story because it was very important for my personal development. It broke down forever, for me, the distinction between the public and the private self. I learned about culture, first, as something which is deeply subjective and personal, and at the same moment, as a structure you live. I could see that all these strange aspirations and identifications which my parents had projected onto us, their children, destroyed my sister. She was the victim, the bearer of the contradictory ambitions of my parents in this colonial situation. From then on, I could never understand why people thought these structural questions were not connected with the psychic—with emotions and identifications and feelings because, for me, those structures are things you live. I don't just mean they are personal, they are, but they are also institutional, they have real structural properties, they break you, destroy you.*[39]

Hall's refusal of the distinctions between public and private selves, and between systemic structures and lived experience, is vividly justified by the tragedy of his sister's life, which is not just his family's personal burden but also part of a collective transnational struggle with the effects of colonization. His sister's story poignantly demonstrates how the structures of colonialism are lived emotionally not just by her but by Hall himself, accentuating the fact that trauma is at the heart of his own story of migration and diaspora. He was successful in his escape to Britain, even managing to forge a discourse of diaspora that could articulate his experience. But he is honest about his own losses as well; he missed out, for example, on Jamaica's decolonizing project and thus couldn't participate in its cultural and political life in the same way that he could contribute to developing a black British culture in his new diasporic location. And in the shadows of his own success is the sister he left behind.

Read next to *Cereus Blooms at Night*, Hall's sister conjures up the case of Mala, another sister (and daughter) who is left behind and seemingly destroyed when the traumatic history of colonialism marks the intimate lives of families. Yet Mootoo offers a way out of the rupture between those who stay and those who go by forging Mala's connections with Tyler and Otoh. She emphasizes how Tyler's queer capacity for identification leads him to elicit Mala's history and bind it to his own. Moreover, she presents Mala's story as something more than total loss and destruction; it is possible to see the damage of colonialism without pathologizing her and to recognize her creative adaptation to circumstance. The other queer characters such as Otoh and Tyler respond to this creativity rather than

being disturbed or alienated by it.

I find it appropriate to conclude by connecting Mootoo and Hall around the figure of a sister's nervous breakdown because their connection consolidates the links between African and South Asian diasporas that are implicit in the Caribbean location of Mootoo's novel. It also underscores the ways in which explorations of South Asian diaspora are important not only because they rewrite U.S. migration histories but also because they go beyond the borders of the United States to include writers from Canada, along with many other nations. My focus on a writer located in Canada and on South Asian culture, one of the most important immigrant cultures in Canada, has been intentional. I am from Canada myself and hence have a strong investment in reading migration histories as part of a U.S. trauma history as well as in expanding those histories to make them transnational and more truly "American."

When I was growing up in Toronto in the 1970s, I was immersed in an urban landscape that was being transformed by migration, especially the arrival of "visible minorities" from South Asia, the Caribbean, and Asia. I was fascinated by watching my friends from Hong Kong and Taiwan, Portugal and Italy, Bangladesh and India, Jamaica and Trinidad, Poland and Czechoslovakia adjust to being "New Canadians" in part because my own life had just been dramatically disrupted by a move from the very different local culture of the Canadian West Coast. I had landed in Toronto as a result of my parents' recent separation, which had been catalyzed by my father's diagnosis of manic depression. I have long resisted the idea that my father's "mental illness" was a product of a chemical imbalance; I see it as a response to the pressures placed on him to succeed and assimilate as the child of immigrants from Serbia and Croatia and to the silence about his own history that marked his family's response to migration. Hall's story of a nervous breakdown that is caused by historical circumstances that include migration is thus compelling to me. Even though the circumstances of my own story are different from those explored here, they have been one of its motivating influences as I search for models that acknowledge the structural force of histories of migration and diaspora as traumatic without "destroying" people. Mootoo suggests such a model by writing Mala's story, and along with Negrón-Muntaner, Parmar, and others, she makes room for an emotional vocabulary that goes far beyond the notion of the happily assimilated or pathologically unassimilated migrant in order to articulate the possibility of cultures that remain livable even when transformed by trauma.

5 AIDS Activism and Public Feelings: Documenting ACT UP's Lesbians

The AIDS crisis, like other traumatic encounters with death, has challenged strategies for remembering the dead, forcing the invention of new forms of mourning and commemoration. The same is true, I would argue, for AIDS activism. What is the current meaning of the slogan "the AIDS crisis is not over" in the context of treatment with protease inhibitors and an ever widening gap, of transnational proportions, between medical possibility and political and economic reality that has significantly shifted the early associations of AIDS with gay men? Like activism itself, the slogan's meaning is constantly shifting. In March 1997, ACT UP/NY marked its tenth anniversary with a return to the site of its inaugural Wall Street protest; while the event suggested an ongoing AIDS activism, it was also an occasion for looking back on a time that seemed now located in the past. What kind of memorial would be appropriate for a movement that while not exactly dead, since ACT UP/NY and other chapters, for example, continue to meet, is dramatically changed? When is it important to move on and when is it useful, if painful, to return to the past? I ask these questions about ACT UP in particular because in the process whereby AIDS activism was the catalyst for what has now become mainstream gay politics and consumer visibility, something got lost along the way, and I'm mourning that loss along with the loss of so many lives.

Another of my interests in approaching the wide range of traumas produced by AIDS through the more specific topic of activism is to explore the assumption that trauma is best addressed by public and collective formations, rather than private or therapeutic ones. Such formulations pit affective and political solutions to social problems against one another. There is often good reason to do so; my own work on sensationalism has suggested as much in examining the affective powers of melodramatic, sentimental, and sensational representations as a displaced response to social problems.[1] Lauren Berlant continues this line of argument when she proposes that within sentimental culture, "the authenticity of overwhelming pain that can be textually performed and shared is disseminated as a prophylactic against the reproduction of a shocking and numbing mass violence."[2] My goal here, though, is to challenge such paradigms by scrutinizing activism for its affective and even therapeutic dimensions, and to question the divisions between public and private, affective and political, on which such distinctions rest.[3] ACT UP is a suggestive example for this project insofar as the group was forged out of the emotional crucible of anger and grief created by homophobic neglect and an escalating number of deaths. Only with a fuller sense of the affective life of politics can one

avoid too easy assertions of a "political" solution to the affective consequences of trauma in which politics becomes a phantasmatic structure that effects its own forms of displacement.

I feel a particular urgency about remembering and documenting ACT UP because as someone who grew up in the shadow of the 1960s—old enough to have vivid memories of the new social movements but too young to have participated in them directly—AIDS activism represented a significant instance of post-1960s' movement activism. It built on the models of direct action established by the civil rights, antiwar, women's, and gay and lesbian movements, thus proving they were still viable, but it was not simply repeating the past since it also created new forms of cultural and media activism, and incorporated a distinctive flair for the visual and performative. As a member of Austin's ACT UP group from 1989, when it started, until 1991, when it became less active, I have been trying to figure out what to make of an experience that has had a changing though persistent and indelible impact on my life. I also can't forget ACT UP because it is entwined with the experience of death; I was drawn to it because of my relationship with two friends, one of whom was the first person I knew closely who was HIV+ and the other of whom, his lover, helped found ACT UP/Austin shortly after he tested positive. When first one and then the other got sick, I spent less time doing activism and more time taking care of them; after their deaths, I didn't really return to ACT UP. Remembering ACT UP has become a way of keeping their memories alive.

Throughout this period and even well after it, I was fascinated with ACT UP/NY, which operated on a far grander scale than Austin's group. I attended meetings whenever I was in New York, and during the summer of 1990, participated in the activities of what was then the Women's Caucus. I was enormously affected by the energy, passion, and productivity of the Monday night meetings at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center. (As it turns out I was not alone; the excitement and intensity of ACT UP meetings, as much as the demonstrations, is a frequent topic in the interviews cited below.) In New York, AIDS activism was also a particularly vital site of cultural activism, which appealed to my intellectual interests; the videos produced by ACT UP's DIVA-TV collective and the Testing the Limits collective, the *Living with AIDS* series produced by Gay Men's Health Crisis (GHMC), as well as its *Safer Sex* shorts, Video Data Bank's collection *Video against AIDS*, and an array of graphics, documented in Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston's *AIDS Demo Graphics*, extended the reach of ACT UP and fostered a public culture organized around AIDS activism.[4] I was also intrigued by the strong presence of women and lesbians in ACT UP, some of whom were working specifically on women and AIDS issues. Cultural documents such as the book *Women, AIDS, and Activism*, a publication that grew out of the *Women and AIDS Handbook* first developed for teach-ins, and Maria Maggenti and Jean Carlomusto's video *Doctors, Liars, and Women*, about ACT UP's 1988 demonstration against *Cosmopolitan* magazine, drew attention to work that might otherwise have remained invisible except to those directly involved in ACT UP/NY.[5]

It has seemed all the more urgent to provide a history of ACT UP's lesbians when, with the passage of time, ACT UP is in danger of being remembered as a group of privileged gay white men without a strong political sensibility, and sometimes critiqued on those grounds.[6] Once again lesbians, many of whom came to ACT UP with considerable political experience, seem to be some of the first to disappear from ACT UP's history. Also troubling is the dismissal of ACT UP as too radical, internally divided, or even a failure. Carlomusto worries about "reductive" representations that "flatten the complexities": "After a while we've seen so much footage of demonstrations and people yelling at buildings, and doing 'die-ins,' that it's almost used the way images of bra burning were used to reduce feminism to a one-note kind of deal."[7] Watching ACT UP's history become prone to

disappearance and misrepresentation has made me wonder about howother activisms have been (mis)represented. And I have also pondered how best to document AIDS activism both in its time and for the future since its preservation makes the claim that it mattered, that it made a difference.[8]

Over time, I also kept noticing the ongoing productivity of ACT UP/NY's lesbians, especially in the context of New York's urban cultural scene; they were making films, videos, and visual art, writing novels and creating magazines, tending to the Lesbian Herstory Archives, and forming new activist groups such as the Lesbian Avengers. Sometimes the work addressed AIDS and activism explicitly, as in the case of Sarah Schulman's novels *People in Trouble* and *Rat Bohemia* or Anne D'Adesky's publication of the magazine *HIV Plus*, but even when the connections were more diffuse, as in the case of Ellen Spiro's move from safe sex videos to trailer park life or Zoe Leonard's photographs of the trees on the streets of the Lower East Side, I could see the legacy of AIDS activism and death.[9] But even this rich archive of cultural materials couldn't answer all my questions. I wanted to know how people looked back on their experience with ACT UP, whether they missed it, and whether it continued to inspire and sustain them.

Uncertain of my own answers to these questions, I decided to consult with others, and thus embarked on an experiment in ethnography and oral history by interviewing AIDS activists and, more specifically, lesbians involved with ACT UP/NY (see appendix). I focused on ACT UP's most visible and well-documented chapter because I wanted to get a sense of the more ephemeral network of friendships and publics that accompanied its vast archive of graphics, documentaries, and papers, and to explore how those affective networks support the political, cultural, and sexual publics that are also fostered by New York's urban environment.[10] Here's a compressed list of questions and concerns I brought to the task of interviewing ACT UP's lesbians: How was it that AIDS and ACT UP fostered distinctive coalitions between lesbians and gay men—coalitions that brought new understandings to the word *queer*? If the erotic and affective bonds that underlie political affiliations were heightened by ACT UP's reputation as a cruising ground as well as its proximity to death, what was the role of lesbians as friends, lovers, allies, and caretakers? From the vantage point of lesbian participation, what does the tension within ACT UP between whether to focus on AIDS and treatment issues exclusively or to tackle other related political issues look like? Examining the trauma of AIDS as it affects not just gay men but lesbians as caretakers and activists is a way of casting a wide net for trauma's everyday effects. One outcome of AIDS activism for lesbians is that they have a legacy; they have the privilege of moving on because they have remained alive. What does this experience of survival reveal about the particular mix of death and burnout that some people cite as reasons for ACT UP's waning? And for those lesbians involved with ACT UP's cultural projects, including graphic arts and media, what has been its impact on their subsequent work as artists?

I aim not to provide a representative picture of ACT UP but to intervene against the construction of such a thing, to capture something of the many specificities of its history and legacy. Although my use of oral history is inspired by my particular emotional needs, my most ambitious aspiration has been to use it to create a collective public sphere out of the individual stories of people who once worked collectively and are now more dispersed. Bringing the stories together serves as a reminder that the experiences they document are historically significant and shared.

AIDS and Trauma Cultures

In the wake of this book's other topics, it is something of a relief, however odd or inappropriate that feeling might be, to turn to the subject of AIDS because its status as trauma seems relatively uncontested. Even sexual abuse can be more complicated to legitimate as social trauma, fraught as it is with distinctions between private and public pain, and between emotional damage and the hard fact of death. Of course, AIDS is no different, especially as a specifically sexual trauma. Public recognition of traumatic experience has often been achieved only through cultural struggle, and one way to view AIDS activism, particularly in the 1980s, is as the demand for such recognition. That battle has involved combating, among other forms of oppression, homophobia, which has ignored the experiences of those disproportionately affected by AIDS by casting them as outside the general public.

AIDS has thus achieved the status of what I call national trauma, standing alongside the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, World War I, and other nation- and world-defining events as having a profound impact on history and politics. Surely, national attention to AIDS constitutes a considerable victory given the early association of AIDS with gay men and hence its central place in the politics of homophobia. Moreover, AIDS has produced renewed forms of a radical politics of sexuality through its links to "vices" and "perversions" such as drug use and sex work. Through issues such as immigration, the prison system, and the national and global economics of health care, it has also required an analysis and a political strategy that connects sexuality to race, class, and nation. But it seems that only some versions of AIDS make it into the national public sphere or archive, which includes cultural artifacts such as red ribbons, *Rent*, and *Philadelphia*. Even the names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and *Angels in America*, which are complex cases worthy of the considerable critical and public scrutiny they have received, are on a different order from ACT UP and its cultural archive of AIDS Demo Graphics, DIVA-TV videos, and Gran Fury public art projects. And even that specialized archive does not always clearly reveal a lesbian presence.

In what form, then, does AIDS achieve its status as national trauma? While connected to the insidious and everyday forms of trauma generated by sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression, the spectacular body count of AIDS commands attention, and indeed comparisons with the body counts in wars are often used to underscore its devastating impact. More so even than the sexual trauma of incest, which occupies the ambiguous terrain of what Berlant has called the "intimate public sphere," it seems to have made its way into the canon of national public culture.[11] Within the university and cultural studies approaches to trauma, the inclusion of AIDS in, for example, Cathy Caruth's important collection *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* or Marita Sturken's *Tangled Memories* can be taken as signs of the success of this effort.[12] Rooted strongly, yet not exclusively in Holocaust studies, Caruth's collection includes an interview with AIDS activists Gregg Bordowitz and Douglas Crimp about the current state of the health crisis, thereby facilitating the production of trauma studies as an interdisciplinary field that crosses many national and cultural sites.[13] Sturken focuses on the Vietnam War and AIDS as defining moments that generate "cultural memory," a process of politicized history making in which the nation uses representation in order to work through trauma. Precisely because it is so consonant with my own project, Sturken's book also provides an important point of contrast with it. Among the valuable contributions of *Tangled Memories* is its argument for the centrality of both memory and culture in the national public sphere, and the strategic and legitimating effects of equating the AIDS crisis with the Vietnam War cannot be underestimated. In chapters that explore representations of AIDS, the AIDS Memorial Quilt (as comparable to the Vietnam War memorial), and

discourses of immunology, Sturken includes consideration of ACT UP and the cultural theory that surrounds it. But while Sturken's inclusive approach accomplishes a great deal—indeed, it offers the legitimating attention sought by AIDS activism—it also mutes the critical and oppositional force of the more marginal(ized) forms of activism that are my emphasis. ACT UP's memory is not the nation's memory, and my more selective focus aims to illuminate a counterpublic memory that has a critical relation to the more prominent national representations of AIDS that threaten to overshadow it.

One of the most significant contributions of this more specifically gay and activist AIDS culture to understandings of trauma has been its insights about mourning. Still occupying a canonical position in my AIDS/trauma archive is Crimp's essay "Mourning and Militancy."[14] I first heard it presented as a keynote address at the 1989 Gay and Lesbian Studies conference at Yale University, where it marked an occasion when activists and academics were in close communication and something only later named queer theory was taking off. Returning to it now, I am reminded of Carlomusto's remarks in Bordowitz's 1993 video, *Fast Trip, Long Drop*, about how the activist documentaries of an earlier period have taken on new meanings, as the footage that once offered proud testimony of a robust and angry resistance becomes a memorial because it depicts those who are now dead.

Crimp's essay can conjure feelings of mourning as well as nostalgia for a lost community and past moment of activism, but it also remains powerful and relevant for trauma studies. Grounded in activism, it offers an achingly concrete as well as novel validation of the famous Freud essay it invokes and provides a fresh approach to cultural theory's longstanding preoccupation with the tensions between psychic and political accounts of social problems. Crimp maintains that militancy cannot ease every psychic burden and that the persistence of mourning, if not also melancholy, must be reckoned with in the context of activism. Turning around a familiar opposition between private therapy and public activism (exemplified by the slogan "Don't mourn, organize!"), he reads militancy as an emotional response and a possible mode of containment of an irremediable psychic distress. His essay is part of a range of texts and practices, including Simon Watney's observations about the politics of funerals in which gay men remain closeted and David Wojnarowicz's vision of throwing dead bodies onto the steps of the White House, that have scrambled the relations between mourning and militancy, between affect and activism.[15] Adding new resonance to the term *intimate public sphere*, these practices counter the invisibility of and indifference to feelings of loss by making them extravagantly public as well as building collective cultural practices that can acknowledge and showcase them.

Crimp also notes that trauma takes many forms, that AIDS means not just the specter of death but also the loss of particular forms of sexual contact and culture, and that one might mourn the loss of unsafe sex as much as the death of one's friends or prospect of one's own death. His argument echoes Laura Brown's essay on the implications of gendered experience for definitions of trauma, in which she introduces the term *insidious* trauma to encompass the ways in which punctual events, such as rape and sexual abuse, are linked to more pervasive and everyday experiences of sexism.[16] She argues that definitions of trauma as "outside the range of human experience" cannot do justice to the traumatic effects of a sexism that does its work precisely by being constructed as normal.[17] Brown's argument can be bolstered and extended by queer theory's critique of "normativity" along with the myriad ways in which it is embedded in practices of sexuality and intimacy. Crimp's attention to the insidious traumas that pervade sexual practices and funerals in a time of AIDS is startlingly material. In making a claim for not being able to use Crisco or not being able to fuck without a condom as one of the losses of AIDS, he introduces the everyday life of sexual practices into the discourse of trauma

in a particularly graphic way. Moreover, the claim that safe sex constitutes a loss challenges the dismissal of certain practices as decadent or perverse as well as the tendency to think that only certain forms or magnitudes of loss count as real. Trauma makes itself felt in everyday practices and nowhere more insidiously or insistently than in converting what was once pleasure into the specter of loss or in preventing the acknowledgment of such losses. It may be a necessity rather than a luxury to consider trauma's impact on sexual life or how its effects are mediated through forms of oppression such as homophobia. This insight seems all the more relevant in the context of the shifting cultures of safe and unsafe sex; recent controversies about barebacking don't make sense without some sympathetic understanding of the attractions of unsafe sex and the significance of its loss.

Crimp emphasizes the ways in which putatively normal practices of mourning are foreclosed for gay men—because they are faced with the prospect of their own deaths, because gay identities are erased at funerals organized by families, because they have been at too many funerals— and thus suggests not only that psychic processes are profoundly affected by social circumstances but also that Freud's production of the normal in relation to mourning might be challenged from the vantage point of queer theory. Although he is suspicious of the category of melancholy because Freud constructs it as an instance of "pathological mourning," and Crimp wants to resist pathologizing accounts of homosexuality, another strategy for a queer reading of Freud might be to return to melancholy and its supposed abnormalities. David Eng and David Kazanjian propose just such a revisionist reading of Freud:

> *Were one to understand melancholia better, Freud implies, one would no longer insist on its pathological nature. . . . We suggest that a better understanding of melancholic attachments to loss might depathologize those attachments, making visible not only their social bases but also their productive, unpredictable, political aspects. . . . In this regard, we find in Freud's conception of melancholia's persistent struggle with its lost objects not simply a "grasping" and "holding" on to a fixed notion of the past but rather continuous engagement with loss and its remains.*[18]

Like Eng and Kazanjian, I refuse the sharp distinction between mourning and melancholy that leads Dominick LaCapra, for example, to differentiate between "working through," the successful resolution of trauma, and "acting out," the repetition of trauma that does not lead to transformation. [19] Not only does the distinction often seem tautological—good responses to trauma are cases of working through; bad ones are instances of acting out—but the verbal link between acting out and ACT UP indicates that activism's modes of acting out, especially its performative and expressive functions, are a crucial resource for responding to trauma.

Using a richer and more sympathetic sense of melancholy to revisit Crimp's distinction between mourning and militancy not only bolsters his argument but also explains its continued relevance. Crimp ultimately argues that mourning and militancy are intertwined rather than opposed; by looking at activism as a response to psychic needs, one that emerges from a desire to project the internal externally, he is in a position to see it as open-ended and ambiguous. Such insight is crucial to understanding the emotions produced by the persistence of AIDS and social injustice amid the waning of AIDS activism.[20] While this current state of affairs can generate debilitating forms of melancholy, Eng and Kazanjian's approach suggests that this need not be the case. Returning to ACT UP's history in order to find what remains does not have to be a nostalgic holding on to the past but can instead be a productive resource for the present and future. In the aftermath of activism, emotional life can be more subtle and ambivalent because there is no longer the clear enemy or fixed target for activism that creates righteous indignation and anger. Just as Crimp highlights the insidious effects of AIDS on

sexual practices, so too would the documentation of activism require attention to a range of everyday emotions that might otherwise fly under the radar screen of trauma studies. To remain attentive to these emotions is to ward off the sense of political failure that can add one more dull blow to the loss from death. Furthermore, the continued relevance of an essay such as “Mourning and Militancy” is another reminder that the archive of activism remains alive.

An Experiment in Queer Ethnography

My project can't really be appreciated without some sense of how unusual, and hence experimental, my choice of interviews as a research method has been. At the risk of reinventing the wheels of oral history, ethnography, and even social science research, I have approached an unfamiliar methodology from the vantage point of a cultural critic accustomed to working with an already existing archive rather than creating one. In fact, I came to oral history with a certain amount of resistance given that my theoretical background had taught me to be suspicious of what Joan Scott calls "the evidence of experience."[21] If our identities as intellectuals are revealed by the texts we love, then you should know that one of my all-time-favorite essays is Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" a critique of the presumptions that the disempowered can speak the conditions of their exploitation (or be known to intellectuals through their personal testimony).[22] But one of the great, and often misunderstood, lessons of deconstruction is that far from undermining the grounds for inquiry, it is at its most interesting when applied to concrete decisions such as those demanded by the practice of oral history. Doing oral history, like doing activism, presents an endless array of practical challenges, including not just who to interview and what to ask but as I learned the hard way, where to do the interview and when to turn the tape recorder off. I quickly discovered that the material logistics of interviewing were not going to produce "evidence" that was in any way "transparent."

Despite my methodological hesitations, I was also intrigued by the radical potential of oral history to document lost histories and histories of loss. Both gay and lesbian as well as activist history have ephemeral, unorthodox, and frequently suppressed archives, and in both cases, oral history can be a crucial tool for the preservation of history through memory. It can help create the public culture that turns what seems like idiosyncratic feeling into historical experience. I have been inspired by the model of ethnographic works such as *Cherry Grove* and *Boots of Leather*, *Slippers of Gold*, in which queer scholars such as Esther Newton, Madeline Davis, and Liz Kennedy come to oral history as members of the communities they document and unabashedly acknowledge their personal investment in their material.[23] Another compelling influence has been documentary film, and in particular queer autoethnographies, including work by Carlomusto, Bordowitz, Marlon Riggs, and Ellen Spiro, in which the documentary maker's story enters the frame, and in which the process of collecting and archiving is charged with affect.[24] Thus, mixed in with my skepticism about oral history were curiosity and fascination. I was driven by the compulsion to document that is so frequently, I think, engendered by the ephemerality of queer communities and counterpublics; alongside the fierce conviction of how meaningful and palpable these alternative life worlds can be lies the fear that they will remain invisible or be lost. Oral history can capture something of the lived experience of participating in a counterpublic, offering, if nothing else, testimony to the fact that it existed. Often as ephemeral as the very cultures it seeks to document (since both tapes and transcripts are records of a live event that is past), oral history is loaded with emotional urgency and need.[25]

In this respect, queer community histories share something with testimony, the genre that brings together trauma studies and oral history. Testimony has been viewed by some as an impossible genre, an attempt to represent the unrepresentable.[26] Trauma poses limits and challenges for oral history, forcing consideration of how the interview process itself may be traumatically invasive or marked by forms of self-censorship and the work of the unconscious. Gay and lesbian oral histories, as forms of insider ethnography, have much to contribute to this project, including a sense of the complexity of gathering information about sexual intimacy that can be applied to the study of trauma's emotional

intimacies. I have wanted to see for myself how the process of testimony works by interviewing a group of people who, while they may not be trauma survivors themselves, have lived, as activists and lesbians, in close proximity to a national trauma. My goal has been to use interviews to create political history as affective history, a history that captures activism's felt and even traumatic dimensions. In forging a collective knowledge built on memory, I hope to produce not only a version of history but also an archive of the emotions, which is one of trauma's most important, but most difficult to preserve, legacies.

Freighted with methodological, theoretical, and psychic baggage, the interview process was always both humbling and revelatory. The burden of intimacy, of encouraging people to talk about their emotional experience even when I didn't know them especially well, was an ongoing challenge. The labor of sympathetic listening in order to facilitate someone else's articulation of her experience was often exhausting, and I felt myself overwhelmed by all the voices in my head. Even with the help of the protocols for gathering life histories, where the emphasis is on open-ended questions that enable interviewees to tell their stories as they see fit, I worried about being too invasive and not representing people's stories adequately, especially since I also had my own agendas and wanted the interviews to address my concerns. The actual labor and practice of interviewing has informed this project as much as the content of the interviews themselves has, giving me a healthy respect for the difficulty of gathering archives of testimony as well as a passionate conviction that they are valuable precisely because so ephemeral.

What follows is an account of my research, based on interviews with twenty-four women, almost all of them lesbians.[27] Most of them were members of ACT UP/NY during its initial and most active years, from 1987 to 1992, but some of them were involved even after that. Extremely significant for my thinking has been a cluster of interviews with women who were not members of ACT UP but were involved with AIDS activism; in addition to having valuable comments about ACT UP, their stories about AIDS activism in the years prior to ACT UP's formation are a reminder not to make the mistake of equating ACT UP with AIDS activism. This is not a reconstruction of ACT UP's history, complete with chronologies and important events. Instead, it is an exploration of the ongoing uses of that history in the lives of those who participated in it.My focus is on the affective life of ACT UP, including experiences of both love and loss, and especially on relationships and political controversies that are marked by ambivalence and conflict, and thus resistant to documentation.

The Affective Public Culture of ACT UP

There was a time in my life when I didn't know anybody who wasn't queer. I didn't know anybody who wasn't involved in ACT UP. I didn't have time for you if you didn't talk about or want to hear about what was going on with AIDS. . . . We all seemed to be living and breathing the AIDS crisis. (Alexis Danzig)[28]

I have so much fondness and respect for the people I worked with in ACT UP. I feel like there's something really special when I run into them. I don't know. It's not like going to school together. It's something else. You took a stand with this person. It's knowing that in some very, very important way you shared at least some basic values with this person. You may not have had a friendship, you may have had other, outside interests. You may like different movies, you may dress in different clothes, but at some point you shared some very important values with this person, and we built something incredible together. (Zoe Leonard)

I decided at some point early on that ACT UP was a collection of really idiosyncratic weirdos, myself included—that it is a group of fringe types who don't fit in in a lot of other places. That's one reason they're at ACT UP. It is an activist group that came into existence and survived because it attracted a particular kind of person who didn't need social approval, who had never gotten the social approval, and therefore, was willing to step out and do civil disobedience, confront authority. I think that there are a finite number of people in the world who will act like that, and that it may be no more than 10 percent of any given population, and maybe even a lot less than that. . . . It is a great gift to find those other people, and you develop an enormous respect and love for every one of them. (Ann Northrop)

People were so angry because there really had not been a place to vent your rage about what was going on. It's so hard to remember what it was like then, with people just getting sick and dying. There were no drugs available, and there was a lot of blame—blaming gay men for having the disease, for promiscuity, for anal sex. [ACT UP] gave people a place to be with other people who were as angry as they were. In most people's lives—at work and with friends—it's not really possible to have that level of venting. People look at you like you're crazy. So [ACT UP] was a really cathartic place. (Amy Bauer)

It really did take on an urgency that made you want to do anything. I began to live in this world where you got to know people, and you got to love them, and you laughed with them and found out how beautiful they were, and they were going to die. In some cases you watched them fucking die. That just seemed immensely unfair. In sort of a naive way, it's like, "You've got to be kidding." I suddenly have this place where who I am is validated, where I can bewho I am, as a lesbian, as kind of a crazy, mad person, as a very emotional person, and there are people like me there. They like me and they love me, and they're there for me. We have fun together, this is a blast, and you're telling me they're going to be fucking dead in a few months, or a year, or two years? No way. That just made you enraged. That made you want to do anything, and it made you want to break the glass in the limo as it was coming up to the demonstration. It was crazy making. (Heidi Dorow)

I think ACT UP did provide a psychic healing, or comfort, or community that was useful during a time of crisis for a lot of people, but not all the people. It's like the high school thing. You run into people and you say, "Oh, what have you been doing since high school?" . . . One thing that's become clear to me is that there were people who did find what they needed or made what they

needed, either within the leadership of ACT UP or in an affinity group. For women and people of color, there were so few of us that we found it among each other. . . . And now, talking to a lot of people who weren't part of any of those things—a lot of white guys—again, I realize women and people of color really had a different relation to ACT UP. But to talk to some of these guys—it was difficult for them too. It really did feel like high school for them too. Few of their needs were being satisfied, they felt left out, they were desperate, they didn't know where else to go, and they just felt shitty about themselves all the time because there were so many cliques, including a popular clique. (Catherine Gund)

I felt like around women's issues you really had to watch your step. I came into ACT UP with that attitude, and that definitely permeated my interaction with people, and maybe I also wondered a little bit, as I became more involved in the organization, "Who are these women who were initially in ACT UP?" They really wanted to work with men, and that was very strange to me. I couldn't really understand it, as drawn as I was to the power of the organization, the ability to get things done, its farreaching political agenda—these were things I respected.

I wasn't so sure I wanted to work with men. So that was the rub. Yet I did develop many close friendships with men, of course. Knee-jerk reactions aside, reality takes over and you have friendships. But I think the women in ACT UP, who were there from the start, must have trusted men politically in a way that I didn't. That would be my guess. Not that they weren't feminists. I'm not saying that at all, or that they didn't have radical politics or understand the oppression and power between men and women. Maybe they just had more trust or something. (Tracy Morgan)

Every time I would come down there with my two dark-skinned little boys, and my red and orange hair from Miss Clairol, from the South Bronx, never once did I feel like I didn't belong there. Never. On the contrary. I was always made to feel so welcome. We bickered about how to put things together, or this issue was more important than that one, but I never felt that sense of "she doesn't belong here." (Marina Alvarez)

Some things that happened at these actions were lousy. Because going to prison is horrible. Socializing was great because there was a good chance you would know someone in your prison cell if you had to sit there all day. It was scary being in there. There is always that uneasy feeling when the door slams. I'm really locked in. It's not pleasant. The social networks helped sustain me, give me the extra oomph of wanting to do these things. (Jean Carlomusto)

I think doing activism, particularly on the level that we do it, gives you a personal trust in people. We used to joke in ACT UP that we would judge people by, if you were thrown into a cell for forty-eight hours, who would you want to be with? Both who would be fun to be with, but also who would you trust not to get you killed in that time? (Amy Bauer)

So the passion with which, the emotion with which people came into this movement and this organization, which was personal—"Either I'm going to die, or someone I love is going to die"—really forces you to cut through the bullshit when it comes to friendship and relationships. You are in it. There's stuff you're dealing with that most friendships don't deal with in a lifetime. And they were all compressed. It was all compressed into this tight, extraordinary little four-year period. Every single week, every Monday night. There was a big joke: "Does the virus take a vacation?" We used to joke, "You can't take a vacation. The virus doesn't take a vacation." That was another thing. There was a great sense of humor and irony. I learned what irony was in that group, from gay men. (Maria Maggenti)

Of the whole group of people whom I was really friends with, there is definitely a feeling of incredible shared history. At the same time, there are also friendships that for me are over for natural causes. We came together at a certain moment and our lives have changed significantly, and we're no longer in each other's spheres. But the intensity was really intense. It sounds sort of lame to say that. . . . But it was simply the way we all seemed to be living at the time. It felt very normal. (Alexis Danzig)

For a lot of people, ACT UP was like a zombie from outer space that ate away at the rest of their life. . . . It got in the way of their job. It got in the way of their relationships or their other friendships, and since ACT UP couldn't meet their needs, eventually they got really mad at it and they burned out. (Amy Bauer)

Collaborative work is so important—but it's like relationships. They're so important, but you have to be so careful about who you get involved with because it can be a complete disaster. It's a relationship. It's made me think more seriously about who I choose to collaborate with. (Jean Carlomusto)

Years later it was hard to see some of the people with whom I had shared so much—jail time, tears, and sex. It was too emotional. It was extraordinary. . . . The whole thing was so intense. . . . My life now is intense but I've learned how to live it. I can get in it, understand it, enjoy it, accept it, and make something of it—and be relaxed. And I don't feel relaxed around some people from that time because it was just so crazy. Our friends started dying in our early twenties and there we were in no way prepared for that. (Catherine Gund)

We also went to one motel on that same trip, I'll never forget, where we were refused. In fact, we were refused at a number of motels because they saw that there were obviously gay men with us. And somebody asked, "Does anybody in this group have AIDS?" and we said, "Yeah, just about everybody does." And they said, "We're sorry. We don't have any rooms." We moved on and on and on until we found a place. Some gay men in one town loaned us their house. We all took a day off and went to the beach. We had a great time. I have pictures from it. It was hilarious. We went swimming. It was amazing.

That to me was the glue that kept that group together. From the outside, it looked like everyone was always yelling, "Fuck you, government, and fuck you—," but in fact, the kind of behind-the-scenes of it was a lot of parties, a lot of drinking, a lot of eating, a lot of love affairs, and extraordinary friendships. That's what kept me in it for so long. It couldn't just have been "doing the right thing," although that was obviously a motivating factor, and a significant factor. That was also the glue. But itwas also a lot of fun. (Maria Maggenti)

I've started by quoting at length from the interviews in order to give as much prominence as possible to the words of the activists themselves. The interviews have a life of their own, and both here and elsewhere I include long blocks of quotations without commentary in order to convey a sense of the larger archive. I think of these sections as themselves an archive installed within the body of my text. Although the editorial process of excision and juxtaposition inserts my own agenda into this archive, the resulting montage creates many layers of meaning, and I especially like the way the quotations speak to one another not only in their agreements but their disagreements.[29] They have a cumulative force beyond their individual meanings.

The above montage is meant to convey the passion and excitement inspired by ACT UP, and the highs and lows of its vibrant social life. Explaining her attraction, Amy Bauer says: "It was a very

queer place. It was really queer, you know, to the core, and that was very appealing. I sort of instantaneously liked a lot of the people in it, or felt at home in it." Ann Northrop describes not only her initial enthusiasm but also her ongoing commitment: "I just fell in love, my first night in the room. . . . It was stunning to me to be able to walk into a room where I agreed with everyone there. That's what has kept me there for eleven years now [fifteen years in 2002], because it's the one place I can count on going and having an honest conversation with people whose values I share." The women talk about going dancing in clubs with ACT UP men after meetings, developing beloved friendships and even romances, and building rituals and traditions such as the annual queer Jewish seder hosted by Alexis Danzig and Gregg Bordowitz; they discuss a wide array of affective networks that underpin activism. Their remarks express the sense that the bonds formed through activism, through sharing a jail cell or values, are particular and special. Jean Carlomusto offers a reminder of how friendship compensates for the unpleasant aspects of activism. Moreover, in ACT UP, the specter of death added to the stakes of friendship; as Heidi Dorow observes, it was impossible to believe that the precious community she had just found was going to be taken away from her. Thus, ACT UP's camaraderie was central to its activism, and it fostered strong bonds between gay men and lesbians that gave substance to newly emerging notions of queer identities and politics. Maxine Wolfe says, "It created a community more than simply a political group."

If friendships and affective networks were a crucial source of ACT UP's power, they were a volatile source, although no more so than the desires and investments that underpin any relationship. References (such as Catherine Gund's) to high school figure prominently in representations of ACT UP as a social milieu in which some people were "in" and others were "out." Says Cynthia Schneider, "I always had such mixed feelings about it, and I think I did at the time. The whole ACT UP scene was such a 'star culture.' It was so much like, 'Who's been out there and who's performing for the whole group?' . . . There were certain people who were so much trying to get attention." The powerful sense of belonging that some people found is therefore matched by the ambivalence of others. Tracy Morgan, for example, was reluctant to work with men and couldn't understand the enthusiasm of the other women she encountered in the group. Involved with a man when she came to ACT UP, she remarked that, "it felt like if you were going to be a woman in this place, you should be a lesbian." There were identifications and disidentifications, including the shared sense of disidentification indicated by Northrop's portrait of the "idiosyncratic weirdos" who made common cause in ACT UP. The lines of inclusion and exclusion are not predictable; for example, Marina Alvarez's comments about her sense of belonging provide a cautionary note against generalizing about ACT UP's racial politics. Moreover, it would appear that if friendship was ACT UP's strength, it was also a liability. As Maggenti and others attest, their activism became so absorbing that they had no other life beyond it, and they could only be friends with those who shared their activist lives. For some people, such as Bauer and Northrop, who remained active members of ACT UP well past its prime, the key to long-term involvement was not to make ACT UP the center of their social life. Offered in hindsight, the comments in this archive convey a vivid sense of both the preciousness of activist relationships and their transitoriness; not only were they interrupted by death but they were specific to the context of activism, and in many cases their intensity could not be sustained. Yet this ephemerality does not make them any less real or important, and descriptions of relationships lost are matched by those of lasting friendships forged in ACT UP.

Although ACT UP's formation of a queer community is distinctive, a focus on its lesbian members also reveals strong ties to histories of feminist organizing. The lesbians in ACT UP had a crucial and visible role, disproportionate to their numbers, because so many of them came to ACT UP with

previous political experience and contributed organizing skills. Ranging in age from their early twenties to forties when they got involved in AIDS activism, they had experience with the civil rights and antiwar movements, feminism and the women's reproductive health movement of the 1970s and 1980s—including the Feminist Women's Health Centers, Women's Pentagon Action, and Seneca Peace Camp—the gay rights movement, and the sex wars. Even younger women who were just out of college (a common trajectory for arriving in ACT UP and a sign of its class profile) had experience with lesbian and gay organizations, divestment protests, and other kinds of campus activism. Some women first got involved with ACT UP because their specific skills led to invitations; Bauer came to the first Wall Street protest in March 1987 because she knew how to organize a demonstration, and Carlomusto was there because she could operate a video camera. In some cases, ACT UP provided an important respite from fractures within political communities, especially feminist ones. Kim Christensen, for instance, had been ostracized by the lesbian community in Northampton, Massachusetts, in part because of her self-identification as bisexual. Wolfe and Sarah Schulman had been driven out of the Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse (CARASA) for homophobic reasons. And Amber Hollibaugh, one of the people outside ACT UP whom I interviewed, turned to AIDS activism in flight from the vehemence and bitterness of the feminist sex wars of the early 1980s.

Almost unanimously, these experienced women note how dramatically ACT UP differed from other kinds of activism. After many years of working within left organizations, Wolfe was impressed with how ACT UP "cut an incredibly broad stripe across the lesbian and gay community in New York," and represented an unprecedented case of "organizing the unorganized." She says, "I felt like I was organizing in there as well as outside of there, that it was an opportunity to open the minds of people who had their minds opened, and that anyone could stand up and say anything, and if you had a good idea, people would do it." Coming from years of experience with Feminist Women's Health Centers and radical left groups, Marion Banzhaf had been determined not to join another group in which one person was the leader:

> *ACT UP, even very early on, was very exciting because this was a different kind of group. It was not a top-down group, it was a bottom-up group, even though there were hierarchies within ACT UP about who was cool and who got to cruise who and who got to do what. It was still a very democratic group. . . . So ACT UP was thrilling. Because, also, it was about people actually fighting for their lives, so it was very immediate.*

Speaking about AIDS activism more generally, Hollibaugh emphasizes how dramatically it challenged movement politics and changed the relation between insiders and outsiders:

> *None of our movements had done the kind of work you ended up having to do in order to guarantee the most fundamental rights for someone who was getting sick. So it was really an extraordinary thing for me. It changed the way I understood activism. There's no way that you have the privilege of just being an outsider when you're fighting an epidemic. You can always be right when you're in an outsider position. Your placard can always sound clever. Your chants can always sound correct. But when you've got to make sure that somebody gets bathed in a hospital, you've got to try to figure out how to maintain that radical position and how to get inside that hospital at the same time, so that when you're not there, that person is still getting cleaned in a way that respects their dignity.*

Although Hollibaugh did not find ACT UP a compelling arena for her own AIDS activism (in the 1980s, she worked in the AIDS Discrimination Unit of the New York City Commission on Human

Rights), her sentiments echo those of many of ACT UP's members who have long histories of political experience—that AIDS activism was an arena of tremendous possibility for them, and that rather than finding it wanting compared with other political causes or organizations, they are grateful for its lessons.

If political experience and cultural capital made ACT UP a "powerful and volatile" organization (in Christensen's words), another element in the mix was the urgency of illness and death. Like many of the men, a large number of women mention coming to ACT UP out of the immediacy of emotional need. Their anecdotes tell a collective story about the importance of friendships between lesbians and gay men, and between artists, both of which occur within public cultures that frequently overlap in New York. David Wojnarowicz had been telling Zoe Leonard how exciting ACT UP was, and she came with him to a meeting on the same day that he told her he was HIV+. Schneider went with Todd Haynes, who was one of her best friends from Brown University and with whom she had collaborated on the short film *Superstar*. Gund came with Ray Navarro, who along with Ellen Spiro and others who joined ACT UP, was her fellow student in the Whitney Program. Not to be underestimated, then, is the concrete power of a specific individual relationship to serve as an entrée into ACT UP. The result, according to Leonard, was an extremely diverse mix:

> *I think there were some conscious efforts later to try to expand our vision and expand who felt comfortable in that room. That's something I'm sure you've heard from a lot of people. A big problem with ACT UP was its racial and economic limitations. But I do think it gained from a certain kind of mix, where someone like me came into that room because I knew people who were dying. I had friends who were dying. I didn't come into that room because I was involved in a certain college, and I didn't come into that room because I was queer. I met people in that room who were older than me, younger than me, who had different backgrounds from me, because we had this one, other thing in common: that someone we knew or loved was either dead or dying of AIDS.*

I would suggest that coming to ACT UP for either political or personal reasons, to the extent they are separable, were both equally essential to the power of the organization. In the face of hostile questions, sometimes from other feminists, about why lesbians would be interested in AIDS activism, they entered a culture in which, as some assert, the distinction between being HIV+ and HIV- was often far more salient than differences in gender. Within the many stories lesbians tell about why they came to ACT UP are insights about disidentifications with feminism, the origins of queer social formations in friendships between gay men and lesbians that assumed public visibility in the AIDS crisis, and the way a diversity of motives and resources strengthened the group.

My focus on ACT UP's lesbians both confirms and disrupts the presumption that ACT UP is predominantly white, middle class, and privileged. Although all but one of the women I interviewed is white, almost half of them are also Jewish, which inflects the ways in which they live their ethnic and political identities. College education, the mark of both class and cultural capital, figures prominently in the stories that many of them tell about their activist histories, but a great number of them, including those with college degrees, also mention coming from poor or working-class backgrounds. Also significant as a mark of cultural privilege is ACT UP's location in New York. Dorow and Polly Thistlethwaite both mention coming from small towns and being drawn to as well as overwhelmed by New York City; Dorow talks about feeling like a "hick" in ACT UP. The number of artists I interviewed is also notable since this category can mean high cultural capital but low economic status, and is thus complicated to gauge in terms of class. Ultimately, it seems reductive to

describe ACT UP as white and middle class or to do so dismissively rather than as an entry point into a more detailed account of what white, middle-class politics looks like, especially when crossed with other categories such as being Jewish, an artist, or queer, or living in New York.

At the same time, the demographics of ACT UP's lesbians are relatively homogeneous when compared with the profile of Marina Alvarez, who was the only Puerto Rican and person of color, as well as the only HIV+ person I interviewed. Her story is distinctive within the interviews; she is a recovering drug addict who learned of her HIV status while in prison and later found her way to an AIDS peer-education program in the South Bronx after having been through a twelve-step program. Through her work with the peer-education program, she met members of ACT UP's Latino Caucus and began to attend ACT UP meetings in addition to becoming an outspoken person with AIDS (PWA) at conferences and government meetings, especially those pertaining to women with HIV. Alvarez has collaborated with Spiro on the video *(In)Visible Women* about women with AIDS; she has been involved with Gund's *Positive: Life With HIV* television series and has acted as a consultant to pharmaceutical companies. As her comments in the opening section suggest, she felt very much a part of ACT UP and responded passionately to its organizational power and style of direct action. But her remarks also redefine the meaning of activism, when she talks, for example, about her response to other HIV+ women in prison:

> *Right in the prison, something happened for me, and I know today, when I think back, that my activism started right there. First of all, as a person, I say I speak three languages. I speak Spanish, English, and compassion. From the way that my life is and my personality, I've always been a very, very compassionate person. So when women who had AIDS in 1985, in this particular institution, were ostracized—which is literally what happened to them—their food was placed in front of their cell. They were not touched. They were "skived." Nobody wanted to be around them. People would talk about them, make comments about them. Immediately. Immediately, in my heart, I felt the compassion for them.*

Alvarez proceeded to help these other women, demonstrating the activism that arises from the needs of daily life. She also strongly identifies as a mother and credits her children with giving her the motivation to get off drugs and survive. Notable, too, is the way her activism is an extension of providing the emotional support and care for people that she learned from her twelve-step support groups. As she puts it in an interview with Ginetta Candelario, "Among Latina/os, the family itself often becomes part of the care of HIV-positive family members. This is a form of activism because there is a group of people involved in care, not just the patient and a doctor. Also, there's an implicit challenge to community denial of the existence of AIDS through caregiving activities."[30]

When I made the trip to the South Bronx, where I had never been before, I not only acutely felt my own whiteness but was reminded of the extent to which most of my other interviews were a form of insider ethnography where I felt comfortable with my narrators because of a range of shared experiences that often went without saying. The difference is also apparent in geographic terms; I only did one other interview outside of Manhattan (Wolfe is happily ensconced in Brooklyn just down the street from the Lesbian Herstory Archives), and within Manhattan, Chelsea was as far north as I got. While I had thought that some of the pitfalls of ethnographic research could be avoided by sticking close to home and interviewing people like me, it was absolutely invaluable to take the risk of making a mistake and hearing from someone whose experience is utterly unlike mine. Interviewing Alvarez was also a reminder that there were other women of color with HIV who were prominent activists, women like Iris de la Cruz or Katrina Haslip, whom I couldn't interview because they have died.

Moreover, Alvarez debunked any presumption that ACT UP was exclusionary by enthusiastically claiming a sense of kinship. In fact, at least as powerful as feelings of exclusion based on differences of identity such as gender or race were cases of what Freud would call a "narcissism of small differences," feelings of not being liked, of being out and not in.

In some cases, the sense of ACT UP as an exclusive social arena was enough to keep people out of the group. Alisa Lebow, for example, mentions ACT UP's social style as one reason that it was not for her, although she also extends her observations to comment on ACT UP's political limitations:

What I was not able to swallow in the few ACT UP meetings I went to were the group dynamics and the cliquishness. It felt too much like a "scene" for me. There were a lot of cute boys and girls who thought they were being really hip, mostly upper middle class and white, and it was as much a party as it was politics. And while I don't object to partying and politicking, at the same time it just was not for me. . . . The kind of activism that was needed then and is needed now has never really been done, and that is being able to mobilize the poor and working-class communities of color in the city and around the country. I think I always felt that with ACT UP. They were never going to touch those communities in any significant way.

Hollibaugh, with whom Lebow worked at the New York City Commission on Human Rights doing AIDS education and media work, expressed similar reservations about ACT UP's failure to address issues of class and race fully.[31] Hollibaugh and Lebow's comments are also a reminder that some people were not more involved with ACT UP because they were already intensively involved with other kinds of AIDS activism (Lebow, for example, also worked at GMHC with Gregg Bordowitz and Jean Carlomusto) and thus didn't need ACT UP as a point of entry into the fight against AIDS.

Another example is the case of Jane Rosett, who was immersed in her work in the People with AIDS Coalition (PWAC) of which she was a founding member more than four years before ACT UP began. (Rosett was the only founder of PWAC who did not have AIDS, and the only woman.) Also a cofounder of the Community Research Initiative and People With AIDS Health Group, Rosett was already deeply involved, as both a treatment activist and a photographer, in issues pertaining to the underground AIDS treatment community. Because of her awareness of the political ramifications of her status as a non-PWA working within the PWA movement, Rosett chose to play a more invisible role.

Because of my unique access to less public—often underground—activities, I believed that the greatest contribution I had to offer was to continue my less visible activist work within the people with AIDS movement. I had already been entrenched for over four years within the PWA movement—as distinct from the broader AIDS movement—when ACT UP came along. And my early PWA movement work was a natural extension of my ongoing disability rights work.

So, while I was involved with the town meeting at which ACT UP was born and attended the first several actions, very soon after it became obvious that ACT UP was quite well saturated, specifically with documentarians. Too often people mark the beginning of AIDS activism with the founding of ACT UP. But by then, generations of PWAs had died fighting for their lives.

Until ACT UP rendered AIDS activism "chic" within the dyke world, lesbians working in the early aidies were often dismissed as confused fag hags and, far from experiencing any sense of "community," we were quite isolated from other lesbian activists, who had specifically chosen not to do AIDS work. (Jane Rosett)[32]

Rosett's remarks, like those of other non–ACT UPers, offer valuable testimony to the vital forms of AIDS activism that preceded ACT UP's formation and that also need to be part of the historical record.

Viewed from the "minority" position of its lesbian and women members, ACT UP emerges as more complex and diverse than it might otherwise appear to be, and as a group whose members are well aware of its possible limitations. For example, the reasons for tensions between men and women in ACT UP were perceptively analyzed by Christensen, who maintains that ACT UP was an interesting coalition not just across gender but also class lines, in which women with political experience collaborated with men who had access to cultural and economic resources.

I think what made ACT UP both powerful and eventually what made it fall apart was that it was the coming together of men of predominantly one class background and women of predominantly lower-class backgrounds— not low-class backgrounds, not like where some of us were coming from. But a lot of the men in ACT UP were coming from what I would call at least pmc [professional managerial class] and sometimes higher. . . . They had access to people, to resources, to media outlets. . . . But it's also then combined—and this is what I think made it both powerful and volatile —combined with a lot of people, predominantly women and some men of color, who were not from that class background but who had the political skills that these white guys needed. They knew how to put out a press release, but they didn't know how to organize a demonstration. Peter organize a demonstration? Please. He couldn't have done it to save his damn life, literally. I think what made it work so well was that those of us from the political backgrounds brought those skills. But we could not call the New York Times the way that Larry Kramer could. But Larry could make the phone call, and we could be kicking his ass to tell him what to say. I think that's what made it actually work for as long as it did. . . . A lot of things that in retrospect were very much about class looked like they were just about gender and got fought out in terms of gender. . . . I think the intersection of class and gender in that organization was complicated, very complicated, and often kind of subterranean.

While offering a critical appraisal of the men's privilege, Christensen also appreciates their cultural access in constituting ACT UP as what she calls an "uneasy coalition." She is not alone in articulating a critique of ACT UP's class and gender politics from within—a critique, however, that can see the group's tensions and precariousness as part of its power. Not only does gender become more complicated when linked to class but class is also a nuanced category. Christensen draws distinctions within middleclass identities to articulate the differences between the men and women since even if they were of "predominantly lower-class backgrounds" than the men, many women had middle-class jobs as well as the cultural capital that comes with being college graduates, artists, and writers. Like the distinctions between being "in" and "out," these nuanced differences suggest the complexity of affinities within political groups—affinities that are as refined as personal tastes and sensibilities. These "queer" affections produced unusual forms of fierce love and bonding, but also points of conflict and distress.

Dyke Dinners

How did lesbians survive in ACT UP? Even if they had strong reasons for being there, it was not always easy. As Danzig points out, "You had to have a taste for the rough-and-tumble of democratic process. This was not, strictly speaking, a feminist organization. Experienced, activist dykes taught by example and shared skills. It helped to be quick and witty and charismatic, and if you wanted to, you could stand in front of a room." Lesbians were resilient and practical, or as Bauer says, "I don't take things personally." And they were strategic. Wolfe notes that the goal was not to monitor every instance of sexism:

> *And other than a couple of the younger women, everyone else had experience already in the women's movement, had experience already with people screaming at each other, and knew it didn't work. None of uswere interested in making the men less sexist than they were by chastising them. We came in to work on AIDS, and we would work on any issues that there were, and we were interested if there were ways of raising issues about women, but it wasn't the only thing. We made a very conscious, collective statement to each other. We all had the same view, which was that some men in the room were misogynists—you were never going to change them. Some of them seemed to be really feminists and would be on our side. And the vast majority were badly trained. We were grown-up about it. We knew what bad training was because that's what we learned from lesbian feminism. We're all badly trained. You know? So, actually, that group of women had an incredible impact on the group because when someone would get up and say, "Let's man the tables," we would just say, "Staff," and then everybody started saying "Staff" the table. We didn't say, "You sexist pig."*

Bauer also talks about using her training in nonviolence and experience with consensus-based groups to negotiate conflicts in meetings. As a facilitator, she was able to build consensus out of a majority rule voting process by calling on people strategically and requesting discussion when necessary. Drawing on both positive and negative experiences with feminist styles of processing, the women frequently mention that they appreciated ACT UP's efficient emphasis on action and concrete proposals. Explains Maggenti: "That part of me that is macho and that part of me that is very testosterone driven was totally thrilled by it. I loved the orderliness of it. They were totally into Roberts Rules of Order, which I thought was fabulous. It didn't have that mushy-feminist-womyn/wimmin kind of thing that I'd been to before, and I rather liked that. It was very in-your-face." The meetings were thus themselves a visible public sphere of protest and activity. As Leonard observes,

> *I was just blown away, mostly by the level of humor and intensity, and the amount of positive energy in the room; it was funny and fast-paced, and people were busy. This was not people sitting around talking—it was busy. It was like next, next, next. The agenda moved. I didn't understand a lot of the language, but I got the picture and I just loved it.*

Although difficulties ultimately arose when organizations such as the Treatment Action Group (TAG) wanted to be able to make decisions without being approved by the entire body of ACT UP, underlying the enthusiasm about the meetings is a utopian sense of the possibility of a collective.

Another mode of survival was bonding together. The pragmatic approach that Wolfe describes above emerged from another of her ideas: the hosting of "dyke dinners" for the lesbians in ACT UP to socialize. As she puts it:

I had learned long before then that the only way to exist in that kind of situation is to connect with other lesbians. So I started having these dyke dinners, and I invited lesbians who were there, and over the next couple of months we invited any lesbian who walked in the door. We ended up with a group of about . . . I guess eight or nine lesbians. And it was really important because the first thing we talked about, the very first dyke dinner we had, was why are we in this group? Why, as lesbians, are we working on AIDS?

And as Carlomusto adds,

AIDS is why I came to ACT UP, but the reason I stayed were lesbians. The reason I stayed was because the lesbians got organized. It could sustain you through the burnout of organizing, that setup—this incredible social net that was very sustaining or nurturing. . . . These dyke dinners were great because you not only socialized but talked about things that were coming up. They were really important in getting people together. . . . I think they [the women] wanted to form an agenda, but the first step was to get to know each other.

The comments about dyke dinners indicate the powerful role of friendship in creating a political organization—activist bonds are not distinct from other kinds of relationships. Thus, although ACT UP's famous reputation as a cruising ground and social scene is sometimes cast as obscuring its political activities, I would suggest that the gay men's cruising and its counterpart in the dyke dinners serve as the foundation of the group's power. Eventually, the dyke dinners provided the organizational energy for the first demonstration to focus specifically on a women's issue—the January 1988 protest against *Cosmopolitan* magazine, in which ACT UP decried an article arguing that heterosexual women were not at risk from AIDS through vaginal penetration. This action was supported by the men in ACT UP and gave the women increased visibility as a constituency. Other key projects generated by the women in ACT UP were the *Women and AIDS Handbook*, which emerged out of teach-ins and was subsequently expanded and published as a book, *Women, AIDS, and Activism*, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Working Group, whose goal was to change the CDC definition of AIDS to include the opportunistic infections more common in women.

The Appeal of Direct Action

I was about whatever was going to get us arrested, whatever was going to get us yelling and screaming at people, whatever was going to cause a fracas—that's where I would be. I wasn't wedded to any particular issue. I wasn't one of those people who gravitated toward housing or the insurance or the drug stuff, or even the women's issues stuff. I was like if they needed a body to stand up in the middle of a thing and start screaming, I'm there. (Heidi Dorow)

First of all, to me it [direct action] always feels very good. I like being out on the street. I like being open about it. I like the challenge it presents to people in the community about whether they join it or ignore it, about how they make that decision. So I like it as a sort of outreach to people in the community, to get them to think about, well, if Pat Robertson is saying what he's saying, are you just going to let him say it, or are you going to object? Do you condone it? Do you dismiss it as not having anything to do with your life because you live in New York and you're not oppressed? So that aspect of it I really like. . . . Also, I have to confess that I really like planning logistics. (Amy Bauer)

She [Amy Bauer] is just a very thoughtful, ethical, caring person, and I loved that, and I thought, "This is the way we're going to get new people to participate in ACT UP and to stay; we'll really take care of them when they're doing things that are scary." It was really gratifying. It was a lot of fun to teach people that they could break the rules, that they could break the rules safely, and that they could challenge authority. A lot of people got thrown together—nice, white, middle-class kids—who didn't know why they should or how they could do something like civil disobedience or risk arrest. So it was a lot of great fun, very talented fun. (Alexis Danzig)

I'm a very enraged person, and for the first time that was getting me rewards. I could be counted on—"Oh, Heidi'll do it. "Other people would do it, too; it's not like I was so unique. There were a core group of mad people, who would go anywhere and do anything. It was like suddenly you get praise or acknowledged, or it's just okay to be enraged about everything. That felt great. And as a person who grew up in an emotionally repressed and anxiety-ridden family life, this was the greatest thing in the world. You were supposed to express your feelings. (Heidi Dorow)

I was never interested in electoral politics. I was really always interested in changing—not to sound like an academic—but, really, in changing discourse, in shifting the way we talk about things. Because when you shift discourse you shift consciousness, and when you shift consciousness it just happens. Things just get done differently. I always knew that, but I never knew how to make an impact. And I knew that ACT UP had changed discourse for families. . . . Suddenly I knew, through direct action, that there was a greater chance of really puncturing the scene. So I was into that, once I could figure out how to make it happen. There seemed to be a big space between political thoughts and feelings and actually knowing how to make it happen. Then when that cavern was sort of bridged, there was no turning back for me. . . . It's like I couldn't imagine how to make a demonstration happen or how to shift the terms of discussion in the public sphere until one day that was something I just knew how to do really well. (Tracy Morgan)

Demonstrations—first of all, it was great exercise. I got to tell you. We walked blocks and blocks and blocks and blocks. I've never felt energy like the energy that we had in those marches. There was an energy that was exhilarating. When I would come back from a demonstration, I would be on a natural high. Cocaine and heroin could never compare to what I felt. I'm serious

about this. I'm serious. There was such a feeling of— my God, we were all fighting for this cause. People were dying, and we were fighting for people who were dying. We were from all kinds of backgrounds, all kinds of cultures. Who had red hair? I dyed my hair whatever—Spanish orange. Who had purple hair? Who was black? Who was poor? We were all together. Do you know the power I would feel when I would come back? I tell you, I was on a natural high for about a week. (Marina Alvarez)

I would say that I felt a responsibility to be there as a witness to the epidemic, an active witness, because it felt like, to me, to do nothing was wrong. I'm not a good service provider. I could not be a GMHC buddy. . . . So again, it's a question of do you stand by and do nothing? Or do you do something? And ACT UPwas a place where I could feel very clear that I was saying I'm not going to let this epidemic go on and lead my life as if nothing was happening. (Amy Bauer)

The famed theatricality of ACT UP's actions offered a particularly visible way of taking a stand. As the above comments show, those drawn to ACT UP were compelled by the power of demonstrations and civil disobedience— a power that is significantly emotional. In the last quotation, Bauer, the organizer of logistics for many actions, provides a thoughtful legitimation of forms of public protest that are sometimes dismissed as too unruly or merely symbolic. Her invocation of witnessing implies a connection to Jewish history and the Holocaust; at one point, she refers to herself as the equivalent of a "good German" by virtue of taking a stand on AIDS as an HIV- person. Schneider also comments on how her Jewish identity informs her convictions about the importance of AIDS activism; there's a link between the Holocaust and AIDS because of "that sense of vast numbers of people who have died of this disease, and how could it happen? How could people stand by? The need to cry out against it is important." As a form of witnessing, direct action consists of taking a visible stand on an issue, itself a crucial contribution to a cause.

Dorow's remarks capture the affective urgency of direct action, which offers a way of "acting out" not just verbally but physically, a performance of dissent that provides a forum for emotional expression as well as resistance to cultural injunctions to remain quiet or reserved. Countering the tendency to pathologize protest as a mode of acting out rather than working through, Dorow is unapologetic about its emotional extremity. She is not the only one to contrast activism's affects with cultural styles of affect variously associated with femininity, whiteness, and middle-class identities. For example, Alvarez also describes speaking out as breaking the rules within Catholic and Latino/a cultures that demand silence and obedience, especially for women. Morgan, one of the organizers of the controversial St. Patrick's Cathedral action in which ACT UP entered the church during mass, remains unapologetic about the demonstration, suggesting that the men in ACT UP who spoke against the action on the grounds that it would create enemies didn't understand the oppression women experience in the Catholic Church: "I felt like the church was, and remains, an enemy of sex and an enemy of women's comfort with their bodies, sexually, and that brings up a lot of rage."

Alvarez's mention of direct action as a drug or "natural high" is a vivid and provocative image, one that she uses in an unexpectedly positive comparison. Dorow echoes this sentiment when she talks about getting arrested: "It's a fifteen-minute sensation of righteousness and glory and beauty and power, followed by hours and hours and hours of discomfort and ickiness. . . . That fifteen minutes, it's like crack. It feels so good when it works that you want to keep getting it, even though it's like the preparation before, the shit after. It sucks. Anybody who tells you it's great all the time is a fucking liar." (And despite her enthusiasm for demonstrations, Alvarez also mentions that as an ex-prisoner, it was not an option for her to be arrested at actions, offering a reminder that civil disobedience is as

much a privilege as a right.) Dorow describes herself as a student of civil disobedience, looking for ways of keeping this form of protest alive. (Both she and Morgan went on from their experience with ACT UP's CDC Working Group to plan a series of direct actions, including the blocking of the Holland Tunnel after the Supreme Court's Webster decision threatened access to abortion.) Whether represented as a strategic form of public intervention or a display of emotion, direct action is characterized in these comments not only as a significant form of protest but one whose value is highly emotional.

Intimacies of Activism

Even as they offer vivid records of activism, the interviews often document the affective networks that underlie the political process only in ephemeral ways. What Carlomusto depicts as "the two major issues we dealt with in the AIDS activist movement—sex and death," have proven to be somewhat elusive in these documents, talked of less than I would have liked or expected. Even when I explicitly asked about friendships, romances, and affective relationships, the remarks were frequently quite general. Carlomusto said, "You want to know who was hot for who and how that brought them into the group?" and we laughed. It's a delicate issue, but a historical record of, for one, relationships between lesbians and gay men is crucial for understanding issues such as queer identity formations and the debates about lesbian transmission of HIV.

It's not just that people were reticent to share information that might seem too personal or gossipy, especially if critical of others; despite my declared desire to blur the boundaries between the political and personal, I found myself reluctant to ask questions that might seem invasive. This was another case in which practice complicates the best of theoretical intentions. Sometimes the best moments are off the record, popping up in the more casual observations that people make when the tape recorder is not on. I become the bearer of information that I'm not sure I can pass on without violating the trust of those I've interviewed.[33] This sense of propriety is a subtle thing, not always the result of an explicit request not to be quoted publicly; it also comes from my own qualms about how to translate nuance into a more public context in a responsible and accurate way. The intimacy of the interview as a live transaction doesn't always emerge in the transcript, especially when excised for quotation. I've been using intimacy to track intimacy, but the results don't always appear in the document; they're preserved impressionistically in the densely overdetermined encounter of the interview. In the end, the interviews sometimes serve as documents of emotion not because of what they do say but because of what they don't say.

When women did talk about sex and romance, their comments offer provocative glimpses of how activism is mediated and propelled by erotic energies (and vice versa). As an example of the kinds of romances that activism inspired, here is what Dorow and Maggenti each said about their relationship, which began when they found themselves partners at a kissin that was part of an ACT UP demonstration about gay marriage at New York's City Hall.

I end up getting involved with Maria. . . . We become lovers in very short order, and suddenly I know people in ACT UP. I mean, I knew people but I didn't really have a lot of friends in ACT UP, and suddenly I got friends. People would talk to me. I got to go with Maria places, and everybody knew her. She was adored, and she was the center of attention—from the men, from the women, from everybody, or so it seemed at the time. So suddenly . . . I was in the in-crowd. . . . I was a hick from the Midwest and still felt like one, and I didn't know what to say. And it was New York City, and I didn't know anything about New York City. It took me a month to figure out the difference between uptown and downtown. And I didn't feel like I could ask anyone because I was full of so much shame about that. So it was very painful. It was like being in high school. And I'm not saying the whole organization was like that, or that was everyone's experience, but that was certainly mine. So to suddenly get attached to this person, who at least by all appearances to me, has the room eating out of her hand, that was quite a high. And it did, very tangibly and practically, give me access to people and places and things. Also, I got shown around New York. I got to see New York, and see that New York was exciting and interesting, and everything I wanted it to be when I came here. . . . I was in love with someone, and I was in love with New York, and I was in love with what

I was doing in ACT UP. (Heidi Dorow)

It was very, very good to have been with Heidi. Because she was young, she was pretty, she was fun, she was totally into it. I didn't have to go outside to explain what we were doing and why. But, again, I look back on it and I wonder if so much of that was because of the circumstances, and not because we were really right for each other in any way, shape, or form, because we really weren't. We had nothing in common. We fought constantly. I always wanted her to be different than she was. It was not healthy. It was not good. . . . We came from totally different class backgrounds. We were just totally different. But itwas nice to have a girlfriend in that group. Very, very good. I needed it bad. I was happy that I had her. The next woman I fell in love with had nothing to do with ACT UP, and I was very excited about that. By the time that happened I was happy. I was thrilled. I thought, "Finally, I can get out of this group." Because, again, it started to close in. The feeling of closing in. Everyone knowing everything about every part of you, and it began to be limiting. (Maria Maggenti)

The comments suggest that activist relationships can be "site specific" (a term that Maggenti used later in the interview to characterize friendships in ACT UP). For both women, their relationship was an extension of activism, a way of negotiating what might otherwise be difficult socially. Both of them felt more included in the group by being together, with Dorow in particular talking about how Maggenti's popularity gave her an entrée not just to ACT UP but to New York. That she was in love not just with Maria but with the larger group and the city, eloquently shows that romance goes beyond couples. And Maggenti's emphasis on the insularity of ACT UP echoes statements made by others about how it wasn't possible to be friends with people outside of ACT UP, who couldn't understand their activist experiences. Dorow and Maggenti's honesty about their relationship reveals the integral role of intimacy in activism.

This point is further underscored by the stories of those who got involved with men in ACT UP, but their accounts of how difficult it was to be open about such relationships adds further complications to the task of documenting intimacy:

Well, I was having an affair with one of the men in ACT UP. . . . We fucked a couple of times but we never told anyone. It was very verboten . . . because we were both big dyke and gay man on campus. Look what happened to me after I did end up having a real affair with a man. I lost every single one of those friends. So there were very good reasons not to let people know. And there wasn't a lot of room for a fluid sexuality because everything was predicated on a somewhat Manichaean view of the world. It was limited, when I look back on it. In the moment it didn't feel limited. It felt like "the truth." But I look back on it and I realize we actually really only saw the world one way. Us, we were right, and everyone else, they were wrong. So when you see the world that way, it doesn't allow for a lot of room for something like, "Oh, I'm a lesbian but, you know what? I actually find some men really attractive and I want to have sex with them." There just wasn't room for that. You were either straight or you were gay. That's it. And that was part of the "you're either part of the problem or part of the solution" mentality that existed. I think it was a siege mentality, too, and that's what created some of the excitement of it, and the closeness. And that's what created, also, a lot of claustrophobia, incestuousness, and insularity problems. Implosion. To me, ACT UP didn't end just because the nature of the crisis changed, though that is significant. It also changed because how long can a group survive in that state of agitation and not be insular? And we were; I don't care what anyone says. We were everything to each other. There was no outside life, very, very little—at least from my perspective as a young lesbian in that

group. (Maria Maggenti)

I got involved with Monica Pearl, who was also part of the book group. Before I got involved with Monica, I was also having a relationship with a man in ACT UP, a bisexual man, that I didn't think I could talk about or make public, either. Part of the reason I had this relationship was because I was talking about safer sex a lot. . . . I had never done it, so this man and I started fucking partly so I could learn how to do safer sex and practice; make my theory real in practice. Also, I liked him. He was a nice guy, and I didn't think it made me not a lesbian anymore because I was having sex with this man. It was the first man I'd had sex with in about twenty years. . . . But we were pretty clandestine about it. It was very awkward, and it was my own shit. I remember once —he lived around the corner from Moondance, the diner, and Richard Elovich was in having breakfast, and this man and I were going to go there to have breakfast, and I turned around on my heels and walked the other way. Because I thought my lesbian authority would be challenged. In fact, it would have been. But I did talk about it in Outweek a little later. I guess we had our little affair for about six months. It wasn't exclusive with him or anything since I was still having sex with Risa and other women. There was a woman from Philadelphia I was having a little affair with, too. I felt very polysexual. (Marion Banzhaf)

I fell in love with ACT UP, and part of what I loved about it was it was so queer. I don't think we used the word queer back then, but it just felt so good to be open about being gay and to feel so affirmed by everyone and to feel—oh I really belong here. Over the course of the time I was involved in ACT UP, I had several different relationships. And although my relationship with Gregg [Bordowitz] was very on-again, off-again, it probably spanned the longest period of time and was a very deep relationship. When I first found myself feeling attracted to him, it was surprising and confusing, and I think it troubled me and made me sad because I thought, oh here's a place I finally belong, I finally identify with a group of people and feel like I belong, and now this set of feelings that doesn't belong here is rearing its head.

At the time, it was curious to me that so many people seemed invested in what I was doing, that people had opinions, that people were either "supportive" (quote/unquote) or angry and unsupportive of our relationship. In retrospect I can understand that. We had created a safe queer space and now there were people having heterosexual sex within that space, occupying that space. I can understand now why that was threatening. At the time it felt small-minded and painful. But I stayed in ACT UP and I still felt good there most of the time, and I still felt I could be a contributing member. There was still room for me to explore my lesbianism, I had relationships with other women while I was in ACT UP, and a queer space is still a space I feel really comfortable in.

Coming out as gay—it gave me a container for my feelings. I had this word, and it could contain my feelings and describe them, and that was such a relief. I think the discomfort I experienced in ACT UP made me learn all over again that the trigger has to come from inside, from your initial desire. And I think now I'm more committed to finding a language that describes my experience rather than finding a definition that works for other people. I think identity politics can be a double-edged sword that way in that this definition and this container you seek for your feelings or for your culture is so helpful, but it can also be restrictive. (Zoe Leonard)

There is a significant discrepancy between ACT UP's professed reputation as a model for queer intimacies, including relationships between lesbians and gay men, and the actual practice, which involves a lot of secrecy. Banzhaf mentions her contributions to the article published in *Outweek* on

"Lesbians Who Sleep with Men," which created a public culture around such relationships, representing them as part of a queer culture rather than as idiosyncratic (or heterosexual).[34] Leonard also wrote about safe sex between women and HIV+ men in *Women, AIDS, and Activism*, offering a public articulation of a practice that Banzhaf as well suggests was part of her motivation for a sexual relationship with a man.[35] This public culture emerged, however, out of lived experience that was considerably messier than its more utopian representation. Reflecting on what made lesbians who slept with men feel so vulnerable to criticism, Banzhaf suggests that it challenged the hard-won and ultimately fragile sense of authority that was part of their sense of what it meant to be a lesbian, especially one with a strong commitment to sexual politics.

Why and how to tell these stories has been a considerable challenge for me. I had lengthy discussions with Leonard about including this material here because she wasn't convinced of its significance for an account of ACT UP's history and didn't want her activism to be defined by her relationship with Bordowitz. We worked to clarify my implication in an early draft of the chapter that she was uncomfortable discussing her relationship with Bordowitz since she insisted that she had no reservations about talking about it, and that her concerns were less about publicity and more about historical relevance. She made a distinction between oral history as witnessing and oral history as confessional, suggesting that the narrative of one's sexual life in ACT UP might be an important story of personal growth, but not necessarily one with public or collective significance. In contrast, Leonard argued,

> *testimony or being a witness is about understanding that your story is part of a larger story that is vital to pass on to other people, that you hold a piece of a puzzle that's part of a picture that other people need to see. What's vital here is that there was this larger picture of AIDS, that there was a criminally negligent response on the part of the government, the medical community, the pharmaceutical companies, and the educators of this country. And there was a social response in this country of fear and punishment and ostracizing people. That landscape is important, that we preserve that and we understand that, that we honor the idea that a very small group of people can change that terrain irrevocably.*

Leonard's questions have challenged and sharpened my thinking. In fact, I would invoke her conception of witnessing to make a case for the value of sexual histories for an investigation of ACT UP as an affective public sphere in which emotional investments are entangled with political ones. Public testimony about sexual practices has been crucial to feminist sexual politics where the willingness of women to go on record about experiences of abortion, rape, and sexual pleasure has provided the foundation for a political public culture. Moreover, the public representation of ACT UP's sexual life in a range of writing by ACT UP members confirms the importance of these relationships even if, ironically, it was not always easy to maintain the same kind of openness in a less public context. But as the testimony of these activists with strong and conscious commitments to sexual politics indicate, real life is more complicated.

For example, in addition to discussing her sexual history in ACT UP, Banzhaf also spoke frankly about her early sexual history, including her experience trying to get an illegal abortion in 1971 during her first year of college when she was very sexually active. At a collaborative public presentation in which we both discussed her interview, she admitted to feeling some embarrassment about how the audience might receive her remarks.[36] Testimony about sexual intimacy is context sensitive, and there is no simple form of openness that constitutes a radical politics. Indeed, one of the most significant implications of these stories about queer relationships between men and women in ACT UP is that

desire, with all its unpredictability, perversity, and contradictions, cannot be prescribed by politics. As Leonard suggests, for example, the categories of identity politics can be as constraining as they are liberating, and "the only truth you can live is by working from the inside out."

Maggenti talks in similar ways about the contradictions of her relationship with Bordowitz:

Were you to have spoken to me even five years ago, I couldn't speak to you openly about the things I can talk about now. Not only did I not have perspective, but the consequences were really great for me, personally, to say, "Well, I was in this really weird situation. We went to the March on Washington in 1987, and Gregg Bordowitz and I—we had sex, and, oh, my God." You know. And meanwhile, we would say, "Go, lesbians and gays. We hate straights!" Isn't that weird? How do you make sense of that, except that human desire is so weirdly uncontrollable. It's like water. It just is. And I have a lot of respect for that now. I thought I had the most respect for it when I was in a very rigid, didactic phase, but in fact I didn't. I have more respect for it now, the mystery of it, and much more of a casual, happy approach.

Maggenti contrasts her current thinking that "human desire is so weirdly uncontrollable" with what she describes as the more "rigid, didactic" thinking of her activist years, when she was more invested in strict categories of sexual identity. Maggenti's comments on how her perspective has changed suggest that the passage of time is also one of the shifting contexts that affects how willing people might be to speak openly about their sexual histories.[37] These shifting contexts present an interesting challenge for the oral historian and for the archive of sexuality.

Nowhere has the "uncontrollable" nature of "human desire" been more obvious than in the AIDS activist movement, which has made a concerted effort to incorporate sexual danger into political organizing and to acknowledge the realities of unsafe sex, drug use, promiscuity, and queer sexual partnerships without pathologizing them. Writing about the tendency to blame those who have seroconverted more recently with the judgment that it is their fault, Douglas Crimp asserts that "I seroconverted because I, too, am human. And no, no one is safe, not you, your boyfriend, or any of your negative friends. Because you and they are human too. My only disappointment in all this is that I should have to protest my humanity to a friend. Still, I understand it, for to accept my humanity is to accept my frailty."[38] I think it neither too utopian nor impossible to imagine a political life that would be able to do some justice to the unpredictability of desire. That sentiment is certainly present in Leonard's call for political movements that can accommodate desire rather than the other way around:

You figure out who you are by paying attention to your own heart, by paying attention to your own body, and living accordingly. Social movements or trends or whatever, they can catch up with you or not, it really doesn't matter. . . . You don't put the cart before the horse. Accept who you are, and try to build a world and a society that accommodates that, rather than saying okay, gay identity is where it's at, so I'm not going to do this thing with Gregg. Try to create a social fabric that's true to what you honestly feel.

Political Conflict

As difficult to document as activist friendships and romances are the conflicts generated by political differences. One especially volatile issue was lesbian HIV transmission, which sometimes found lesbians pitted against one another rather than collectively galvanized by an issue that spoke directly to their concerns. While some members of ACT UP felt that the risk of HIV transmission between lesbians (through sexual contact) was negligible and focusing on this issue was a waste of energy, others believed that it was an important way to address lesbian invisibility within the AIDS crisis. One of the most vociferous opponents of the latter strategy, Sarah Schulman, argues that attention to lesbian HIV transmission was a cover for the AIDS hysteria within ACT UP generated by the "queer" sexual relationships between lesbians and gay men. Despite such skepticism, lobbying around the issue of lesbians and HIV led to the creation of the Lesbian AIDS Project at GMHC in 1991, with Hollibaugh as the first director. Yet this "success" was also fraught with dissent about whether GMHC, which had been an ongoing target of activist suspicion, was the appropriate home for such an organization. Writing about this history is difficult because much of it is fraught with personal differences and battles; expectations and disappointments run high when lesbians are working on issues close to home or there is internal dissent.

An equally contentious flash point within ACT UP was the 076 clinical trial that tested pregnant women for the effects of azidothymidine (AZT) on perinatal transmission of HIV; it came up in several interviews as a tense moment in which the status of women's issues within ACT UP was at stake. Some were opposed to the trials on the grounds that they treated pregnant women as vectors. There were also objections to the use of a control group on the grounds that it was unfair to women who wanted access through the trials to what might be life-saving treatment. Other women felt that opposition to the trials was ill-advised and that it might be possible to lobby for improvements without rejecting them out of hand.[39] This debate reflected already existing tensions within ACT UP between working on the inside and working on the outside, between negotiating with government officials and engaging in direct action. During this period, ACT UP's Treatment and Data Committee was acquiring the increasing power and independence that eventually led it to split off to become TAG. Meanwhile, the call for greater attention to women and HIV had coalesced by 1990 and 1991 into a push to change the CDC definition of AIDS to include opportunistic infections that affect women. (There was a major demonstration at the CDC in Atlanta in December 1990.) One of the critical moments in ACT UP's history occurred when the CDC Working Group proposed a moratorium on all negotiation with government officials for six months until the definition was changed. The 076 trial and call for a moratorium were both issues that did not produce a unified front among ACT UP women, who had differences of opinion about strategy, and especially about how far to go in pressuring other ACT UP members and groups.

The interviews show a range of attempts to explain a contentious moment in ACT UP's history, particularly around women's issues and participation:

A lot of the women who came in then would literally do what the men were doing then, which was to get up on the floor and say to you, "If you don't support this action, you're a sexist. How dare you question our point of view? We can't have a dialogue about this; you just have to follow it." At the same time, the people on Treatment and Data were doing the same thing. So the two weren't unconnected in terms of where the organization was at that moment. But I can remember Larry Kramer and I both sitting down and trying to get those two sides together. Because we still

had the view that that was the way things got done in ACT UP, which was to figure out what was the common ground between people, that was not below its common denominator. . . . But the women who came in then were women who had, really, an "us or nothing" kind of attitude. (Maxine Wolfe)

I have to say I had very mixed feelings about the whole thing. Because I totally agreed with Maxine and Heidi and Tracy that these trials were horrendous, that they should be stopped. I also had—I guess just from many years of political experience—I had a sense in my gut that the guys were not going to give on this one, and that if the women were persisting in this demand, it was going to split the group because . . . it was the class/gender thing again. . . . I remember feeling horrible during that meeting because it was like watching a train come at you and knowing that this is going to split the group. And the women were right. But on the other hand, I was very reluctant to watch this train because I knew that when we lost those guys, we were going to lose access and we were going to lose the privileges that class had given them. And I thought that was a dangerous move. And I think I was right. (Kim Christensen)

I thought it was an ultraleft position, actually, because it meant a moratorium on any meetings with government officials. Then it didn't deconstruct the quality or the character of the meetings that were happening, or that could happen, or who was at the meetings, or whom did we want to send to the meetings, or how did you get access to the meetings? So I didn't agree with it, and I spoke against it. I was in government meetings. I was part of the Governor's Advisory Council in New Jersey. I was arguing with the Department of Health all the time, and I was trying to get government to do the right thing. I felt like I was doing a good job when the head of the AIDS division of the Department of Health would say, "Uh oh, here comes Marion." Then I knew I was doing a good job, right? When he would start out a meeting saying, "OK, Marion's here. I guess we're going to have to hear about blah, blah, blah," then, OK, I'm doing a good job. So I had a slightly different perspective on it. I didn't think that you automatically had to get co-opted. I thought you could have a struggle about that, and fight co-optation, instead of just succumb. I also thought it was an incredibly classist position to write off all these workers, in AIDS, rather than try to recruit them to be AIDS activists in their place of work. Not everybody had the luxury to be an AIDS activist and have another job, so if we wanted to try to fight co-optation, it was in our own interests to organize workers in AIDS. So that's what my position was on it. (Marion Banzhaf)

I would say that the moratorium didn't splinter the organization, but that rather, it represented a preexisting schism within it. I think I was like, "Here, let's put a label on it." But by the time the vote came to the floor of ACT UP, I remember thinking that it was beside the point—the damage was so done, the divisions so clear. I remember thinking, "Even I don't want to vote on this." . . . I had been observing the group, where it was going, and I thought, "This is never going to fly. People don't want this. Some people do, but most people don't. And I just have to decide, do I want to stick around in an organization that I think is really shooting itself in the foot?" And the answer was no. No way.

After the vote, it was really no longer safe for me to be in that organization—talk about traumatic. I loved working in that organization. I had gotten so much out of it. I definitely had different ideas about things than some people, but once I knew I had allowed myself to become a lightning rod, I knew I just had to shut the fuck up. There was no way for me to speak there anymore. I became somebody who you couldn't really— like an untouchable. (Tracy Morgan)

Tracy became a real lightning rod for people's suspicions about that idea [the moratorium]. . . .

Tracy, because she's the person who put it forward, became the focus of a lot of animosity. That animosity, in part, and all of this tension, really was, for me, like a loss of innocence about the organization and about my relationship to it, and my relationship to other people. I felt like this was my home, and it was suddenly becoming a dysfunctional family. It was becoming the thing I ran away from when I came to ACT UP, and I was really devastated.

It was really painful. The disintegration of ACT UP—I feel like I was depressed for a lot of years. I'm kind of a depressive person, but I would argue that I was really depressed. Because I lost . . . a lot. I'm not saying I lost more than anyone else lost, but I personally lost a lot. I lost a home. . . . It was my intimacy. That's where I had all of my friends. . . . It was my identity. (Heidi Dorow)

I'm inclined to let these quotations speak for themselves because it seems risky to comment on their convergences and tensions without getting caught up in adjudicating between who's right and wrong. If as Christensen puts it, the call for a moratorium was "a morally right move," but one that would have "grave political and personal consequences," such assessments are bound to be simplistic. Sorting through these recollections is complicated because of reactions to Morgan's style, which was seen by some as combative; she was personally targeted, scapegoated even, as a troublemaker in the context of conflicts within ACT UP that actually exceeded individual personalities and differences. The disagreement with Morgan was pronounced enough that people specifically named her, as well as Dorow. This was unusual in the interviews, where personal disagreements were more frequently described in vague or veiled terms. I felt it was essential to seek out both Morgan and Dorow because I didn't feel comfortable telling the story of the moratorium without their input.

If anything, the stories are quite consistent despite the political differences. Wolfe's depiction of the women who came into ACT UP at a later stage is corroborated by Morgan's account of herself as a feminist who didn't understand how the lesbians in ACT UP could be interested in working with men. Although she was opposed to it, Wolfe presented Morgan's moratorium plan on the ACT UP meeting floor because she wanted the tensions created by rumors about it to be confronted directly. Wolfe hoped that it would be quickly defeated (as it was), but as she notes, the deeper conflicts remained: "The damage had already been done in that the Treatment and Data people became more and more nasty re any of the women's stuff. I think it's possible that would have happened anyway sooner or later because they were moving more and more to the 'inside' and the women's stuff was still on the 'outside.' "[40] Banzhaf 's opposition to the moratorium is particularly pronounced because by then she had largely left ACT UP for her work as director of the New Jersey Women's and AIDS Network (NJWAN), and she had also been angered by ACT UP's disruption of a meeting to discuss the 076 clinical trial since it made it impossible to argue for the improvements to the trial that she had worked so hard to get. Her comments from outside ACT UP, however, echo the sentiments of many women inside the group. But more than sorting out the details of who was on which side of the issue, I tell the story of the moratorium as evidence of how difficult it can be to document political conflict. Although I was often encouraged to be a tougher or more aggressive interviewer, it was ultimately important to me not to have an adversarial relationship with my interviewees and to listen for the stories they wanted to tell. For both Morgan and Dorow, the pain of losing ACT UP and their attempts to understand why their actions were seen as divisive are key parts of their stories. In pursuing the history of the moratorium, I gained an appreciation for why the interpersonal and affective dynamics that accompany political conflicts might not emerge in an interview. The interviews and my own account of them contain silences or evasions that mark these difficult histories.

Activist Shame

My decision to write about conflicts within ACT UP has been a difficult one, pervaded by the fear of "airing dirty laundry" and creating a picture of ACT UP that detracts from its many accomplishments. I take inspiration, however, from Amber Hollibaugh, who recognizes the powerful dynamics of shame within political movements, and I'd like to close this chapter by considering not only her comments in my interviews but her recent work on the concept of "dangerous desires."[41] Why is it that the same woman whose writing is central to this book's chapter on butchfemme sexualities would also play a crucial role in accounts of AIDS activism? I was eager to interview Hollibaugh not only to get a sense of her work with two projects outside ACT UP—the AIDS Discrimination Unit of the New York City Commission on Human Rights in the 1980s and the Lesbian AIDS Project at GMHC in the 1990s—but also because I was curious about the connection between her earlier history with the sex wars and her subsequent move to AIDS activism. Hollibaugh is no stranger to the feeling of being "uncomfortable" in political organizations that is described by some of the other AIDS activists. She cites many experiences— as a lesbian within leftist and antiwar politics, as a high femme in gay and lesbian movements of the 1970s, as a working-class sex radical in feminist movements of the early 1980s—of being an outsider within her own movement. She describes how the sex wars brought her to AIDS activism, as "the one place I could figure out where my activism, my sexual politics, and my understanding of class and gender and race would be valued contributions rather than making me 'other,' and to be isolated and stayed away from."

Hollibaugh speaks passionately about the terrible consequences of movements that ostracize and shame people, and when I asked her about whether sexual desires and identities are particularly prone to such dynamics, she responded by making links between sexual desire and activism:

> *Around sexuality, I think people believe very quickly that they're deviant, and that they're not part of a collective experience that they can use to buffer some of the impact of criticism. So when you say to somebody, "There's something wrong with you. There's something deviant or perverse about your desires," it's the loneliest, most dangerous, and most vulnerable place, and the place I think people are least able to resist and come to terms with themselves and still be open about their own issues. . . . I think the loneliness of that early sex radical politics was exactly—I think we were brave there in away that was different than other kinds of slights and humiliations that come in political movements, which I think aren't good. But around sexuality I think people are more vulnerable, more isolatable, and more prone to believe that they are in the wrong. Being a sexual minority in your own movement is a very uncomfortable position. I've been out now as a high femme for twenty years almost, and this is not a point of pleasure for me. It's given me great pleasure, but it's an extraordinarily difficult place to defend. . . . It's very hard to hold out for the right to be profoundly sexual; to hold out for your own desires; to figure out what they mean and claim them, when they even seem a little dicey to you. It's not gay pride.*

Closely connected to sexuality are feelings of belonging and vulnerability that are fundamental to political organizing. Hollibaugh's remarks name humiliation and shame as problems for political movements, which can purport to embrace freedom while making people fearful of articulating their most deeply held desires and feelings. They help explain why my interviews might contain only fleeting hints of personal experiences of both love and death, and especially those experiences where one has felt most isolated or alone. Included in this category are political conflicts that can also leave people feeling isolated by the convictions that are most dear to them.

As Hollibaugh contends, "Our refusal to take on sex is one of the fundamental reasons we have not created a larger movement. Because we refuse to incorporate the dynamic of danger and vulnerability and sexuality into our organizing, and that is what sex represents in most people's eyes. It's the thing that they either never have or that they lose everything in order to have." In both her interview with me and *Dangerous Desires*, Hollibaugh dramatizes this point by telling the story of how she attempted suicide after a Gay Pride march in San Francisco in 1978 that was a show of force against Anita Bryant's antigay campaigns in Florida.

> *I was proud to be part of it that year, angry and defiant about all the homophobia surrounding us. I was also full of inarticulate grief. The fundamental importance of gay liberation was unequivocally clear to me. But my desires, the way I felt and expressed my own queer femme sexuality, now positioned me outside the rights I was marching to defend. My internal erotic identity made me an alien to the politics of my own movement—a movement I had helped start, a movement whose growth and survival I was committed to.*[42]

Hollibaugh's willingness to make her own story public underscores the persistence of vulnerability and isolation even for an experienced activist dedicated to sexual liberation. "When individual desire rides that fiercely through a person's intrinsic, intimate set of principles, there can be no resolution of the crisis without an extraordinary self-confrontation, a coming to terms. Because of that, this story is important to tell and remember." [43] Her testimony and use of it offer legitimation of what might seem like painfully personal stories as a crucial part of the archive of activism.

Hollibaugh's comments suggest that one of the contributions of sexual politics can be models of organizing that are more attentive to the dynamics of shame and isolation that complicate activism. My use of oral history to investigate the affective complexity of activism complements Hollibaugh's call for new forms of political organizing that can do justice to sexuality, and by implication, emotion. Even when the interviews point to places where things cannot be said or articulated, they are a way into an understanding of activism that can accommodate the full range of its affects, including not just its camaraderie and righteous indignation but also its ambivalences and disagreements. While an oral history of ACT UP constitutes a record of its accomplishments, it is a tool for exploring political difficulties and challenges as well. As such, oral history is itself a complex tool, sometimes revealing these issues only through gaps and silences within the interviews and conflicts between them. But this material, too, is part of the archive of activism, particularly an archive that focuses on feelings.

6 Legacies of Trauma, Legacies of Activism: Mourning and Militancy Revisited

Gregg Bordowitz's 1993 video *Fast Trip, Long Drop* portrays his disenchantment with AIDS activism as he struggles with his long-term status as HIV+. Honest about his depression, he resists the model of surviving and living with AIDS that was so crucial to activism and his own media production (as coproducer with Jean Carlomusto of GMHC's *Living with AIDS* cable television series), and he refuses to be the representative poster boy who rejects victim status. Intertwining AIDS with the death of his father in a car accident, Evil Knievel's daredevil stunts, and the Jewish diaspora, Bordowitz explores the relation between the shock of traumatic accidents and the more banal depression of life with AIDS. Footage of Knievel leaping over rows of cars is linked to sexual risk and Bordowitz's driving lessons in a funny as well as literal take on the death drive and its incursions into everyday life. One of the video's particularly memorable moments is Jean Carlomusto's discussion of the shifting meanings of activist video over time. She comments that what had once been testimony to a vibrant activist culture has become a site of mourning because so many of the people documented are dead. Her remarks constitute a crucial revision of Crimp's argument that militancy can sometimes displace mourning since they suggest that the militance of AIDS activism has ultimately been converted to mourning.[1] Carlomusto's observation that activism's affective meanings have changed dramatically also served as a major inspiration for my oral history project, sparking my desire to talk to other AIDS activists about changes in their feelings.

I was, of course, particularly eager to interview Carlomusto herself about her ongoing experience of the ways memories of activism are combined with those of death. She worried about ACT UP's visual history being "used as wallpaper. Whenever you want to talk about activism, just throw in some protest footage, even if it's not about the action you're referring to." Carlomusto describes her struggle, in the period following her involvement with ACT UP, to live with the experience of mortality, and how that has led to her renewed interest in history and archives.

That's actually a very difficult thing to come by—recognizing the fleeting nature, the constantly changing nature of life. It almost sounds trite, but it's an incredibly profound part, for me, of acclimating to life now. I had a very tough period of time where I almost didn't go out for a year. A lot of different things played into that, but a lot of it was this struggle with mortality. Michael Callen wrote this song, "We Are Living in Wartime," and the song is describing the experience that only people who survive, I guess, epidemics or natural disasters or wars are familiar with; where

in such a short period of time you lose a whole part of your community of friends. All of a sudden people are gone from your life. . . .

I'm not advocating living like a hermit as a way of dealing with this. It's just a phase I had gone through. But activism—in a way I think part of my way of dealing with this loss related to activist work was also somewhat activist in nature. Getting more involved with the Lesbian Herstory Archives. I really became interested in archives, and I think part of that is related to a more mature attitude toward history. I think there was a kind of mentality for those of us who were twenty-somethings during the AIDS activist movement, who believed there was nothing like this moment. This was truly mind-blowing what we were doing—and it was. But in the wake of the loss of that, I also began really culling or nurturing an appreciation for not just my history but just the historical artifact.

Carlomusto is one of many women I interviewed whose ongoing projects continue to engage with AIDS, and especially death and loss. Just as video made possible a new kind of activist documentation, so too is it producing new ways of documenting activist memory. Carlomusto talks about the importance of having her archive, now easily accessible on a desktop computer, around her on a daily basis. She is working on a project in collaboration with Jane Rosett—called AIDS: A LIVING ARCHIVE™, which will consist of a number of installation pieces designed to mobilize their combined archive of video and photographs to reflect on history and bring the past into the present.[2] "I just feel like it's vitally important to have access to these archives," explains Carlomusto, "because when I go through them they constantly give me a new approach to the present." For her, a readily accessible video archive "starts to break down the boundaries between space and time, so that past and present—well, at least the past—is just so accessible and able to be drawn into one's work."

Carlomusto describes being consumed with the work of grieving during the period after she left ACT UP—a process she couldn't adequately give over to while in the midst of her activism. Banzhaf also characterizes mourning as a protracted and belated process when talking about what happened once she left her work as director of the New Jersey Woman and AIDS Network (NJWAN):

Part of it was that when I left NJWAN in 1996, people were still dying right and left, and it was very difficult, all those deaths, and for a long time, as long as they keep coming, one right after the other, you can steel your defenses to keep up the fight. But it also makes the fight all the more immediate. You don't have time to cry. You've got to keep on fighting. But now all those people are just gone. You just miss them. And so many women, so many women, not a few of whom, in my case, were actually lesbians. But lots of fabulous women. . . .

Then there's the gay men, too, who were my friends, whom I miss. So when you're out and removed from it your defenses are way less strong, so that I find now that it's the deaths that remain with me, actually. I find this fascinating, actually. It's one of the reasons why I'm not still doing AIDS work, I think. Because you have to do it fully. You can't do just a little bit of AIDS work because otherwise you'd be crying all the time, and you can't be a very effective public speaker when you start crying in the middle of your rap. I have found that to be true for myself, and that's been a new discovery in the last couple of years because I still do some training and it's way harder than it used to be, in terms of really having to steel yourself. And I'm a person who had come to AIDS work having already experienced some multiple deaths in my life, my mother, very young, and my grandmother, who raised me, at age thirteen. So I already knew what death was

about. I knew the impact, and my father died right when we were finishing Women, AIDS & Activism. When you've already experienced multiple losses, then you can deal with more multiple losses in a slightly different way. But then once you don't have to anymore, then, great. Great. I'm outta here, in a way. So I think that's happened to me. Not exactly consciously. In fact, I'm sort of articulating it for the first time in quite this way now. I had had the other stuff about the pharmaceutical critique. I understood that as a reason why I wasn't doing AIDS work, but I hadn't quite gotten this other, this mourning piece.

It's telling that Banzhaf describes being less able to return to activism now that she has had some time to grieve. Mourning AIDS also brings in its wake other deaths and losses, such as, in her case, the death of her mother and grandmother (just as Bordowitz explores his father's death as part of his own struggle with AIDS). Being inside a crisis, particularly as an activist, does not always provide adequate opportunities for mourning. Moreover, because this unfinished mourning can prevent future activism, learning how AIDS activism has put people in contact with death and mourning is crucial to looking at activism's legacies and its futures. Crimp's insistence on the need to recognize mourning as part of militancy has an ongoing relevance. In addition, I want to hold open the possibility for melancholy laid out by David Eng and David Kazanjian, who suggest that incomplete mourning, a holding on to the past that keeps the dead with us, can be a resource.[3]

The affective energy that ACT UP derived from friendship is inevitably influenced by sickness and death. Catherine Gund, for example, talks about her relationship with Ray Navarro as pivotal in her history with ACT UP, citing her involvement with DIVA-TV as part of a collaboration with him. She stopped going to ACT UP in 1990, the same year that Navarro died, although she also notes as a factor her disenchantment with the 1989 Stop the Church protest at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Carlomusto, too, mentions the impact of Navarro's death on the DIVA-TV collective, saying that although there were other reasons for the demise of its first incarnation, his death was a major factor. I sense that such stories of endings are always complicated. As we continue to discuss it, Gund suddenly realizes why she can't remember much about that time; her long periods at the hospital were both absorbing and mind numbing. This is a story of activism structured around the intensity of friendship—a friendship that combines romance and collective work.[4] These are intimacies shot through with longing and loss, and they are the foundation of activism's affective power. For Gund, it can be sad to recollect her ACT UP history and even its legacy because it involves taking the measure of years in which she has continued to live while her friend has not.

Also speaking of Navarro, Heidi Dorow comments eloquently about the encounter with death that was enabled through her activism:

To me one of the pivotal moments was with Ray Navarro. He was sick for fucking ever, and he was in St. Vincent's, and by the time I saw him there he was deaf in one ear and blind. So the only way to talk to him was to get in bed with him and talk in his good ear. And he was also, I think, a little dementiated by then. It was such a weird experience. Again, my hickness came out. I'm in New York City, in bed with this emaciated, gay man, who had really long hair at that point, too—it was in braids or something. He looked wild. He can sort of understand what I'm saying, and he's being really sweet to me. And I wasn't really, really close with him, but he was my peer in ACT UP, and my comrade, and I went to see him. When I left there I was unraveled. I had never seen anyone that physically sick, and to be that close to him, and to touch him. I remember at one point going into the bathroom to wash my hands, going, "I am not in Michigan anymore, and I don't know how to handle this." And I also didn't want to be freaked out. Because that was the other thing: we're

in ACT UP, AIDS is our life. But I was freaked out. It was sickness. It wasn't like I felt I was going to get AIDS, but I felt like this sickness was on me. Not that I was going to get sick, but there was something on my skin.

Dorow's willingness to acknowledge fear is remarkable, as is her ultimate recognition that such experiences constituted an "opportunity":

The thing I began to think over time, in ACT UP, was that this dying thing that people were doing was an opportunity. It was an opportunity to be intimate with people, as someone who had a lot of obstacles or barriers to be intimate and not a lot of skills to do it. This race to death, to fight off death, or to stop death, was an opportunity to be intimate with people, to share with people, to talk to people, to be close to them in a way that was humanly possible in my small world, but was never going to be humanly possible in a regular world.

Her comments reveal the proximity to sickness and death that contributed to the urgency and emotional intensity of AIDS activism, and they underscore the simultaneously frightening and transformative power of an encounter with death. Dorow's remarks suggest that sickness and death were like activism in providing opportunities for unusual intimacies. Overall, the interviews lend confirmation to Crimp's warning that activism can suppress mourning, and they indicate that one of the aftermaths of activism for many people was the need to find a space for mourning that had not been available in the midst of activism. But they also suggest that activism created a context for powerful and strange encounters with death that are the material of testimony and witnessing for the people I interviewed.

One value of oral history projects is that they can provide a public space for the emotional work of mourning at a time when the collectivity of activism may have faded and people are more isolated. As the preceding material shows, these interviews with AIDS activists are precious documents of mourning. But talking to activists about death and loss is terrain that is often as sensitive as the stories of intimacy and political controversy discussed in the last chapter. I've thus been drawn to another genre that has been important for testimony—the memoir—because it creates less of a burden of responsibility than do the interviews. Memoir has the potential to explore emotional terrain that is harder to get at through interviews; the sanctuary of writing, its privacy and deliberateness, potentially offers an arena for emotional honesty that is different from the live performance of an interview. For example, it was hard to negotiate tears in interviews, to know whether to stop to let someone cry or encourage him or her to talk through tears, and whether to move delicately past the emotionally fraught material or pursue further questions about it. The convention of not letting affective expression get in the way of talking, of not "breaking down" the flow of conversation, led me to question the emotional dynamics of the interview and its possible limits as a vehicle for emotional expression.[5] It's also easier to write about memoirs than interviews due to the less personal connection between the critic and text. And finally, because memoirs are already in the public domain, there are no complicated issues of permission to negotiate.

Memoirs of Caretaking

Within queer culture, memoir has been a particularly rich genre for documenting the AIDS crisis, providing gay men with a forum to articulate what it means to live in the presence of death and record their lives before it is too late. AIDS and the specter of death produce a form of archive fever, an urgent effort toward preservation in order to grapple with loss.[6] The temporality of AIDS offers, if not time to live a full life, then possibly time to record some part of it. From Paul Monette to David Wojnarowicz, from Derek Jarman to Gary Fisher, there is a wide range of testimony to the experience of living and dying with AIDS.[7] In addition to being a significant genre within AIDS culture, memoir has increasingly become the genre of choice for trauma cultures, threatening, much to the dismay of some critics, to displace fiction for audiences seeking the sensational effects of the true confession. Its power as a genre perhaps lies in its elasticity; not only does it span the distinction between obscure oral history and sensational best-seller, it can also occupy and express a range of political positions.

Even though it has become an expansive category, the literature of AIDS, including both memoir and fiction, is marked by a relative absence of representations of activism. For those suspicious of memoir, this may only confirm the view that memoir's emphasis on personal and affective experience runs counter to the collective sensibility that activism encourages. In my interview with her, Schulman claims the distinction of being one of the only novelists to have represented AIDS activism in her writing, and she describes her fictionalized representation of ACT UP as the activist group Justice in *People in Trouble* as an attempt to use literary means to articulate an activist agenda. Her subsequent novel about AIDS, *Rat Bohemia*, is less hopeful about the state of response to the AIDS crisis, chronicling the increasing emotional toll taken on those who have seen far too many die.[8]

When lesbians affected by the AIDS crisis have taken up memoir, their primary focus has been not on activism but on the experience of caretaking, which produces in its own way an encounter with death that demands witnessing and testimony. Jan Zita Grover's *North Enough*, Amy Hoffman's *Hospital Time*, and Rebecca Brown's *The Gifts of the Body* (a novel that uses the narrative strategies of memoir) form a small subgenre of AIDS memoirs about caretaking, and I use them here to consider how they expand the emotional archive of lesbian experiences of AIDS and complement the activist oral histories. Collectively, these works also contribute to discussions within trauma studies about "vicarious trauma" and "secondary traumatic stress," the forms of trauma experienced by those who work with trauma survivors.[9]

Although activism may not be central to the memoirs, viewing them in relation to the activist oral histories makes it possible to consider their continuities as well as what each genre contributes to the AIDS archive. Memoir interests me as an extension of the oral history archive, giving that archive wider publicity through the institutions of print culture and introducing the flexibility of formal experimentation. Like the activist interviews, the memoirs complicate the overlapping relations between mourning and militancy. Moreover, they resist any firm distinction between caretaking and activism, not least of all since Grover and Brown both focus on the volunteer labor organized through the institutions for home and hospital care created during the AIDS crisis. Together, these memoirs powerfully install the testimony of lesbian caretakers as part of the discourse of trauma, and they also articulate the labor and love of caretaking in ways that reframe understandings of trauma.

Jan Zita Grover's Burnout

In*North Enough*, Grover writes an AIDS memoir in a series of essays about her move from the Bay Area, where she worked with people with AIDS for several years at San Francisco General Hospital and as a volunteer caretaker, to Minnesota, where she seeks refuge in the unlikely landscape of the rural north. She leaves San Francisco suffering from "burnout," which is so often the personal and occupational hazard of those doing political and social service work around AIDS. " Sudden bouts of crying, inexplicable depression and tiredness, inability to relax, refusal to answer the phone at home, guilt-driven willingness to take on ever more tasks"—as described by Grover, burnout sounds very much like trauma.[10] One of the valuable contributions of the materials to be explored here is that they reveal trauma's contaminating effects on those who seek to counteract it, as the labor of both caretaking and activism produces its own traumatic effects. Grover, though, displays a humility that is characteristic of many of these writings when she describes her ambivalence toward writing about the AIDS crisis: "My memories seem too slender to bear so much scrutiny. . . . Writing about people who are dying, who are dying of AIDS, exerts a sufficiently morbid attraction to draw some readers. I can lay no claim to the authenticity of illness: I was not a pivot person in the emergence of AIDS activism; I am only a writer who lived inside the epidemic" (6–7). But Grover is also compelled to offer testimony: "I want to record what I saw and experienced. I want to bear witness" (7). She argues for the necessity of an archive that can counter official histories and that includes genres such as memoir:

> *What drives my writing is fear that accounts of AIDS in the 1980s will principally be those of history's likely winners: the pharmaceutical houses, the federal agencies and researchers with huge budgets, the service organizations that emerged and swelled to deal with the epidemic, then diversified into other services in order to survive. Their accounts are unlikely to include the day-to-day stories of people for whom the epidemic was not something approached from without but something that happened from within. (7)*

Grover makes a case for memoir as a crucial historical document in particular because of its capacity to offer personal testimony, including the affective lives of those who experienced the epidemic "from within."

Central to this project in *North Enough* is Grover's striking linkage of AIDS with the Minnesota landscape, especially its "cutovers," land that has been scarred and abandoned after multiple generations of logging as well as failed attempts at agriculture. (The book's subtitle is "AIDS and Other Clear-cuts.") Grover takes the risk of both homology and biologism in order to examine the love that can tie one to both traumatized bodies and traumatized landscapes. She moves to Minnesota because she "want[s] a place I can explore slowly, slowly, like a lover's body, like a body I will tend —what, after all, has become more familiar?— but that will last longer than any body" (13). The word "tend" suggests the link between a lover's "tenderness" and the kind of "tending" or caretaking that sick bodies require. Grover looks at the erotics of the intimacy created by meeting the needs of another's body in sickness; in each part of the body where AIDS, with its elaborate multitude of opportunistic infections, makes its presence felt, she finds an opportunity for the expression of physical tenderness. Along with the other lesbians who write about AIDS and caretaking, Grover brings renewed attention to women's domestic work, chronicling the details of cooking, dusting, bathing, and dressing that constitute the activity of cleaning up after bodies and houses. Chores that are frequently associated with domesticity and maternity are, in these texts, given a queer dimension by being eroticized. Rooted in the physical and material, the tasks of caretaking involve many forms

of touch, and these lesbian caretakers introduce a tenderness to this manual labor that expands an understanding of the erotic to encompass the queer love between lesbians and gay men that AIDS so frequently produces.

While AIDS and Grover's relationships with a number of different gay men dying of AIDS are central throughout *North Enough*'s essays, many of the pieces approach this material obliquely through representations of the Minnesota landscape that articulate Grover's belief that "each destruction is also a construction" (7). Aware that she might be accused of using her move as a refuge or escape, Grover suggests that she is not looking for easy comforts, and that if the land provides any solace, it is only insofar as she acknowledges the presence within it of much that is cruel, harsh, and meaningless.

> *The North Woods did not provide me with a geographic cure. But they did something much finer. Instead of ready-made solutions, they offered me an unanticipated challenge, a spiritual discipline: to appreciate them, I needed to learn how to see their scars, defacement, and artificiality and then beyond those to their strengths—their historicity, the difficult beauties that underlay their deformity. AIDS, I believe, prepared me to perform these imaginative feats. (6)*

In *North Enough*'s essays, Grover imagines a language for the trauma of AIDS by writing about Minnesota's geographic traumas, which include the colonization of indigenous peoples, natural disasters, and generations of European settlement that have been economically marginal and environmentally invasive. Grover recovers from burnout by making a home for herself in this landscape that is itself burned out, exploring the meanings of nature and being a "native" without romanticizing the natural. Her essays can be read as literally taking up Leo Bersani's critique of "pastoralizing" theories of sexuality; Grover's avoidance of the pastoral offers new ways of understanding not just landscapes but trauma, AIDS, and sexuality.[11] Revising also the urban and metropolitan focus of so much of gay and lesbian (and AIDS) culture, Grover finds in the clearcuts of Minnesota a vision of nature that does not indulge in the nostalgias that have often underwritten genocide.[12]

In essays about trout fishing, landfills, her search for a house in the cutovers, and her trip to Manitoba's far north, Grover offers a radical environmentalism, one that does not privilege nature but instead proposes that there is no pure nature that has not been produced and affected by the conceptual and material impact of humans. In the essay titled "Becoming Native," she describes her love of trout fishing, the goal of which for her is coming to know the landscape rather than catching fish; much to the bemusement of the park ranger who catches her fishing out of season, Grover casts without a hook. In her meditation on the joys of fly-fishing, she considers what it means that this experience of nature is often artifically produced by wildlife management bureaucracies that stock rivers for recreational fishing. Rather than bemoan the inability of even the most enlightened environmental policy to re-create the rivers in their natural state, Grover comes to the conclusion that there is no such thing, and that "pain and displacement are also engines of change, of new designs" (94). Quoting from Aldo Leopold, Grover notes that "one of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds," trained to see the many ways that the land has been mutilated and destroyed by human inhabitation. Yet rather than wholly deploring this destruction, Grover asserts that "the charm lies in finding ways to live with such loss and pull from it what beauties remain" (81).

As a migrant to Minnesota, a state with a particularly visible and politically active native population, Grover must inevitably address the history of the traumatic usurpation of the land by European colonizers. Yet while she is attentive to the land rights claims of native inhabitants, Grover makes a case for her own place in this land: "I do not believe that being native to a place gives any

creature unqualified claims or advantages over those of a non-native; to believe so is to deny the importance of adaptation, of history" (93). Earlier, Grover has mentioned that European colonization of these lands has been only one of the more visible and recorded forms of conflict, which has also seen the displacement of the Dakota by the Ojibway. She makes a case for an immigrant culture, portraying herself as acquiring a "dual citizenship" in the land: "I like to believe that I am earning a dual citizenship, learning local patterns but standing at a slight remove from them, like the chronically ill, the very poor, and the otherwise disenfranchised. I settle for this nativism-at-aremove" (161). She distinguishes herself from other settlers and colonizers because she comes singly, occupies land no one else seems to want, and remains respectful of it. Grover's thinking is consonant with indigenous values that emphasize ownership of land as a form of caretaking and responsibility, or a material obligation and practice, rather than an abstract or profit-making form of possession. Addressing the problem of how national identity and ownership of land and property converge, Grover argues for a different understanding of the native, one in which a close tie to the land does not preclude trauma and transition. She acknowledges the (often destructive) presence of Europeans and proposes a different way of being an "American."

Even if Grover's sense of belonging or entitlement might seem problematic in relation to native claims, she reflects native forms of thinking by stressing belonging or native status as a function of everyday and material familiarity rather than legal or economic entitlement. One must live daily in one place in order to make it home; Grover records her loving relation to land that others might find ugly, forged out of the tenderness that she gives to the scarred landscape. She resists the transnational, translocal lives of people whose days are spent moving quickly through many places. This sentiment is most clearly expressed in the book's final piece, the title essay "*North Enough*," which chronicles her trip further north, across a national border in fact, to the Hudson Bay town of Churchill. Grover finds the trip by turns exhilarating and frustrating because she discovers she cannot be a tourist. She would only be interested in coming to know this landscape and culture by spending a good deal of time with it "to make it an outpost of personal geography, a place whose changes from season to season, I could learn to mark as intimately as one does changes in a lover's body" (165). She is alarmed by the tourists who want only to gawk at polar bears as they search for ever new extremes of geography. Grover is intrigued by less spectacular attractions, preferring the more ordinary and everyday world of observing incremental seasonal change in her backyard or a nearby landfill that can seem like waste and garbage, yet be home to teeming wildlife.

This patience of vision that is expressed in Grover's relation to the land also characterizes her relation to those sick with AIDS. Installed in the midst of Grover's essays about Minnesota and the rural natural environment is the essay titled "San Francisco," an account of the world she left behind. Weaving together the stories of several men, among them one of her clients, Darryl, her friend James in Los Angeles (whose death is the focus of a later essay in the collection), her friendship with Lou, whom she meets by chance in an auto shop, and her friend/client Eric, whom she first meets through Darryl, Grover recounts both the gay cultural scene in San Francisco, an entire city marked by AIDS, and the growing death toll that ultimately forces her to leave.

Especially prominent is Eric's story, which receives sustained attention toward the end of the essay. The inclusion of Eric's history comes as something of a surprise because Grover has previously explained that many of her clients are so consumed with the challenges of the present that she learns little about their lives, especially since she chooses to do "practical" rather than emotional support as a volunteer for the Shanti Project. Eric, though, tells her about his early history of sexual abuse by his father—a history that is reconjured when his father and stepmother come to spend time

with him as he gets sicker. Although Grover does not explicitly say so, it seems possible that her interest in this story has to do with its resonances for women and lesbians as she watches this gay man grapple with whether he can confront and/or forgive his father, as well as with the emotional force of repetition in his father's presence at his bedside while he is vulnerable. There is no melodramatic deathbed resolution; Eric's father seems entirely oblivious to the past. Grover also offers no easy answers or evaluations, acting only as a witness for the story of a man who, in her first encounters with him, seemed completely misogynist. In this essay in which the representation of AIDS and people with AIDS is more overt, one glimpses something of the many stories and experiences that Grover carries with her to Minnesota.

Indeed, Grover's account of her own emotional relation to this traumatic history is an instance of what I would call, invoking the argument from chapter 2, stone butch feelings. Queried as part of the selection process about her motives in applying to do volunteer work, Grover is honest about the possible codependency of her relation to people with AIDS, willing to admit to being "someone who controlled her own scary little life through a circuitous effort to fix someone else's" (53). She is compelled to do volunteer work because "I wanted to work against the epidemic in a grunt's position. I already knew what was missing for me in most of what I read about AIDS: writers tended to approach the epidemic from the comparatively lofty yellow-Playtex-gloves removal of cultural theory rather than from the trenches of everyday warfare.—Yes, I know: the military metaphors. . . . I was a trench worker, still am" (54). For Grover, caretaking is a kind of militancy, an activity that requires that she get her hands dirty with the manual labor of cleaning and cooking. "I thought that the people I could best serve would be more likely to divulge any burdensome thoughts while I was scrubbing out their tubs or folding their laundry. Confidence, I thought, was *earned*" (30). Submitting to the needs of others, Grover finds herself unable to feel, caught up in the urgencies of caretaking because "if I start to cry over it, I am sure I shall never be able to stop" (39). She is willing to be honest, at the risk of being pathologized, about the emotional reality of life as an AIDS caretaker. Grover offers another instance of the styles of stone butch feeling, making feeling and vulnerability visible through her inability to feel. Like Brown and Hoffman, she backgrounds herself to write about the trauma of AIDS. The men for whom she cares, like the landscape, are important for coming to know herself; she expresses her feelings in feelings for others.

Amy Hoffman's Crankiness

In *Hospital Time*, Hoffman's memoir about serving as a caretaker for her friend Mike Riegle, crankiness becomes an antidote to the sentimentality of representations of death from AIDS. Hoffman strives for emotional honesty in portraying Mike's often unpleasant behavior and her own doubts about her generosity or efficacy. Mike's struggle with AIDS and Hoffman's relation to it seem to exemplify Schulman's deromanticizing observation in *Rat Bohemia* that rather than being changed or dignified by their illness, people with AIDS "just become themselves. But ever so much more so. If they took care of things before diagnosis, they take care of things afterwards. If they were selfish and nasty, they go down that way" (52).

Although *Hospital Time* tells the story of Mike's death, Hoffman is more interested in the process of caretaking that precedes it and in how she continues to live with that responsibility after his death. Mike's death occurs not, as one might expect, at the end of the memoir but somewhere in the middle, simply one moment in an ongoing story of emotional work that includes memory of the event yet also exceeds it. Hoffman says, "In my memory in my writing I circle around it like a hawk riding a thermal. I close in upon it, but unlike the hawk, I never plunge. The moment of death. Here it is."[13] She has waited for this moment for some time, having seen Mike through the daily details of sickness, a failed trip to Austin that lands him in the intensive care unit of a Memphis hospital, and the difficult process of deciding how he wants to die. As his legal proxy, Hoffman struggles with the responsibility of how to respect his desire to die at home and his resistance to going to a hospice. She is not afraid to admit her own failure and anxiety at being torn between wanting to discuss do-not-resuscitate orders and memorials with Mike in order to give him agency and wanting to respect his refusal to make such decisions because they imply an acceptance of his impending death. Of ultimately signing the do-not-resuscitate order, Hoffman maintains, "So that moment of choice is not the crucial moment, the central scene, the one that has to be written about or else. I don't have to write about it" (65). That moment or Mike's death itself are less significant than the series of more daily and local moments that form the basis for each of the short vignettes that cumulatively structure this memoir. Death is not a punctual or melodramatic event in her narrative, not only because it is anticlimactic but also because Hoffman continues to carry the burdens of caretaking after Mike's death. *Hospital Time* stresses the ongoing impact of death both literally, as Hoffman handles the details of Mike's ashes and his insurance policy, and more generally, as Mike's death gets linked to the wider presence of AIDS in her life and that of others.

Like Grover and Brown, Hoffman is unsparing in the material details of life with AIDS as witnessed by those who are caretakers, and she illuminates the strange intimacies that AIDS produces when there are no family members or lovers to be primary caretakers and the task falls to friends. Just as the person with AIDS has to confront the telescoping of life to the local details of bodily maintenance, so the ally in the struggle against AIDS must turn from high-concept politics to the pragmatics of shopping, eating, and shitting. The conventions of generosity and social pleasure are placed under pressure by the proliferating needs and weaknesses of the sick person. For example, hoping to give Mike a pleasant vacation, Hoffman invites him to stay with her at her summer home in Provincetown. But even spending the day at the beach is a challenge for someone who can't be in the sun, can't read with any sustained focus, and can't lie still comfortably for protracted periods. Prone to resentment at Mike's intrusiveness and anger at his intractable complaining, Hoffman constantly worries that she is a bad caretaker. She experiences her one moment of feeling that she might be doing something right after staying with Mike during his last night at home before his final visit to the hospital. It is a night

spent "cleaning off his bum when he didn't make it, mopping shit off the floor, and helping him in and out of the bathtub" (14), and when he finally gets settled, he asks her to lie down beside him until he falls asleep. Hoffman states, "I didn't want to cover myself with his scratchy pilled blankets and clammy sheets," but she "cherishes" his acknowledgment that her "presence is a comfort," even as she knows he is wrong in comparing others unfavorably to her. Not only does Hoffman insist on the material, and often unpleasant, aspects of caretaking but she resists any easy sense of gratification or self-satisfaction with her labor.

Just as Hoffman refuses to romanticize the person with AIDS, even a friend she loves, so is she excruciatingly frank about her own shortcomings as a friend. Especially notable is her jealousy of those who seem closer to Mike or who view him more warmly. Speaking to Mike's friend Carrie after his death, she learns about his combative rejection of Carrie toward the end of his life, and she is left thinking about what an "asshole" he is, even though Carrie herself has a number of kinder explanations. Far from being supported by shared grief, contact with Mike's friends seems only to invoke memories of his bad behavior. Even in his absence, when the worst might be forgotten, Hoffman's ambivalence about caretaking and Mike himself persists, and her emphasis on this undercuts any tendency to idealization after the fact. In the book's final long section, titled "The Afterlife," Hoffman explores how the dead persist in memory no less problematically than in life. For Hoffman, memorials don't do it. She doesn't like them and resists going to the potlucks and rituals for scattering ashes organized by Mike's other friends. Hoffman is also skeptical about political funerals, arguing with a friend that they don't accomplish anything because there is no one locus of blame. Recalling Crimp's argument, she writes, "We're in mourning. Don't mourn. Organize! But who said that? Not someone gay. Not someone from the Age of AIDS. For a minute . . . can't it be just us? Not hundreds of thousands of AIDS cases worldwide, but just this one person, here in this bed, quietly dying?" (106). Hoffman is left with her anger and an inability to cry, manifesting, like Grover, a version of stone butch feelings.

Hospital Time's crankiness might be considered Hoffman's form of grieving. It pervades even the writing process as she describes a visit to a writer's colony in order to have uninterrupted time to work on the book. There, in supposedly hospitable circumstances, Hoffman is crabby as usual, resentful of the other residents' cheerfulness and productiveness. To prepare for writing, she reads others' memoirs about death and finds herself moved to tears by one woman's account of patiently feeding chips of ice to her mother who is sick with cancer. "Even when I did those same things for him, it was as though I hadn't. Because of the bad spirit in which I did them. By the time he needed to be fed ice chips, I was too angry, too confused. . . . I fed Mike soy milk, I fed him ice chips, but in anger and resentment at his stubbornness, his refusal to do anything that would really help him, like go to the hospice" (96). This detail about ice chips frees Hoffman to cry, but in a way that includes her anger and resentment:

> *I never cried for Mike, but I'm crying now. I cry because I miss him, because I loved him, because I feel so mean, because his death was so terrible, hard, and early, and I didn't treat him tenderly, because my job is not working out and he would have wanted it to, because I'm unhappy in this place full of strangers and cats, because never in my whole life have I done even one thing right. That is why I hate to cry. All misery, great and petty, past and present, conflating in tears. (97)*

There is something touching about Hoffman's own stubbornness and anxiety as well as her account of how trauma brings so much else in its wake, including the small sadnesses of daily life. She holds

on to this meanness and is plagued by it.

Another of the goals of the final section of *Hospital Time* is to link Mike's death to that of so many others dead of AIDS, including many other friends of Hoffman's. Acknowledging that one of the terrible effects of AIDS is that people have had to deal with multiple deaths, she observes, "Stupid as the lists might be, I'm not talking anymore to anyone who doesn't have one, who hasn't been ticking off the names of the people they know like they're the malach hamaves, the Angel of Death, who flies around with His list. . . . Fuck everyone who, at the mention of AIDS, wants to tell me all about it because they saw it on TV or sobbed openly at the story of the gallant death of some acquaintance's second cousin" (114). There is a particular intimacy that comes into being through caretaking—different, special, and frequently unrelated to whatever one's relationship before the sickness was—and Hoffman's sense of being misunderstood by any except those who have similar experiences echoes the shared intimacies of the AIDS activists. Caretaking and activism both create an experience of AIDS that is unlike that of those whose relation to AIDS is less direct, often literally mediated by the media. Hoffman writes primarily about one person not in order to single out Mike's death as unusual or special but because out of this particularly close bond of caretaking comes a particular relation to AIDS, one that is part witness and part survivor. Distinctive both for its focus on one friend and its unrelenting candor about the difficulty of friendship, Hoffman's work contributes to AIDS memoirs a refusal to find redemption or transcendence in Mike's death.

Rebecca Brown's Gifts

Brown, by contrast with Hoffman, does seem to find "gifts" in the work of caretaking. Yet they are hard-won gifts, and she shares Hoffman's insistence on representing the material realities of caretaking as frequently gruesome and unpleasant. Perhaps some of the differences between these two texts stem from the chosenness of the activity of Brown's unnamed, largely undescribed narrator, who works as a volunteer for an AIDS organization that provides home care. Hoffman falls into her labors as a primary caretaker because of her already-existing friendship with Mike; Brown's narrator comes to know her patients because they are assigned through an agency, and sometimes her contact is limited to only a few visits. Whereas Hoffman describes anger, resentment, and jealousy, and Grover depicts burnout, Brown's narrator focuses on the intimate transactions with her clients that allow her to receive "gifts" from those to whom she is giving her volunteer labor. Still, *The Gifts of the Body* is far from sentimental, nor does it indulge in the forms of redemption that Hoffman resists and Grover rewrites; indeed, it shares with those memoirs a resolute and uncompromising antisentimentality as it articulates its sense of what the trauma of dying from AIDS and the trauma of witnessing those deaths might have to offer.

The Gifts of the Body's distinctiveness can also be attributed to its status as a novel rather than a memoir. Brown uses the genre of experimental fiction for which she has become known to interesting effect in this work, which is composed of a series of discrete episodes written in the first person by a narrator who absents herself from the stories, providing few details about her own life.[14] Rather, the emphasis is on the people for whom she cares. By making her own history invisible, the narrator performs the receptivity to the pains and stories that is part of her labor (and gift) as a caretaker. Effacing the autobiographical presence of self that tends to be the mark of a memoir and can equally be expected in a novel with a first-person narrator, Brown instead uses the formal conventions of the novel to highlight the peculiarities of the AIDS caretaker as a particular kind of witness to the trauma of AIDS.

The possibility of trauma as a gift is invoked not just by the novel's title but by the titles of the segments, each of which begins with the phrase "The Gift of." Moreover, each segment is structured around what more traditional formal criticism might term an epiphany, a dramatic moment in which the horror of death and decaying bodies condenses around a gesture, an act, or a recognition between the patient and caretaker that becomes the focal point of the story. Often these moments are physical ones, emerging out of the embodied labor of caretaking. In "The Gift of Sweat," the narrator breathes in the sweat left on her clothing after embracing her patient Rick. In "The Gift of Skin," she painstakingly bathes Carlos, who asks her to leave him uncovered because "the air feels good . . . against [his] skin."[15] In "The Gift of Speech," she leans in to hear Rick struggle to say the words "I miss you" that she herself could not say to him when he left her care to enter a hospice. Like Grover's and Hoffman's memoirs, the novel is grounded in the body by virtue of its attention to the materiality of caretaking. Like Grover who chooses to do household rather than emotional work, Brown's narrator sticks to the humble tasks of cleaning and cooking, nurturing her patients at basic levels, doing the kind of work that is often taken for granted or seen as less desirable. Intimacy and affective relationships are based on physical transactions. Cumulatively, these AIDS caretaking memoirs add to queer representations of sexuality by finding eroticism and affect in physical acts that occupy a far wider range than genital sexuality, and in relationships that are just as intimate as those between families, lovers, or friends.

Brown's narrator dignifies and dramatizes the many acts of physical caretaking by stressing the

affective labor that accompanies them, particularly the kinds of emotional attention that make care such a delicate intimacy. The narrator's self-effacement and narrative invisibility stem from her ability to open herself up to the needs of her patients. Like Joan Nestle writing about the "gift of touch" exchanged between butch and femme lovers, and butch lesbians writing about tending to the needs of their femme lovers, Brown's narrator understands the loving nature of submission to the needs of another. The caretaker is like the butch lover who tends to her femme, but she is also like the receptive femme who can be touched by others—in this case, sick patients. Her ability to do so seems to depend on her distance from her clients; her own emotional needs and investments can be temporarily set aside because it is her job to give of herself to her clients. Far from being impersonal, she can potentially take better care of her clients than someone like Hoffman whose prior relationship with Mike informs her responses to him. Even when her tasks are manual ones, her labor is affective as well as physical. In "The Gift of Hunger," she prepares a meal for Connie, knowing that she will be unable to eat it, and understands the need to let her secretly retreat to the bathroom to vomit and cry. She gives her patients the dignity of their own agency at a moment when they are almostly totally deprived of it. At one moment when her attentiveness to applying salve to Keith's Kaposi's sarcoma lesions wavers, she articulates her desire to be present not just in body but in mind. "I was not going to think about other things. I was going to stay with him even in my mind." Unable to live up to her own standard, she comforts herself in this way: "I hated myself for thinking that. But I also kept telling myself that even if I wasn't feeling or thinking the right things, at least he was getting fed, at least he was getting his sheets changed, at least his kitchen was getting cleaned, at least his body was getting salve" (121–22). Brown endows caretaking with the status it deserves as an enormously demanding emotional transaction.

The result of the narrator's care and Brown's narration of it is a profound witnessing, one that is material and embodied in the activity of care rather than in hearing stories. In "The Gift of Death," she does hear Marty tell the story of how, as an act of profound friendship, he helped Carlos to die, and she thereby legitimates his action. But the story is also about what it means to be present for the physical fact of death. She herself is present for the death of Keith, whom she holds in her arms until his mother arrives, and that of Connie, who is surrounded by her family. Being a witness to death is a profoundly physical experience in *The Gifts of the Body*, a matter of one body literally touching another body.

Ultimately, a narrative line emerges in *The Gifts of the Body* as the stories become more linked with one another, at which point the narrator also becomes more prominent. The turning point is her experience of burnout, which increasingly disrupts the self-effacing receptivity that has been so remarkable. She finds that she is growing attached to her clients and that their deaths profoundly affect her, and she becomes reluctant to take on new patients because the bonds of attachment are too painful. Ironically, then, caring interferes with caretaking. Her supervisors suggest she work as a substitute for others so that she won't for many ongoing attachments. By the novel's end, it is apparent that she will probably take a break from volunteer work. One of her steady patients, Rick, goes to the hospice, and her supervisor Margaret, with whom she has worked since the beginning, has now become sick. The novel ends with the death of her last full-time patient, Connie. It is an odd sort of closure—no more stories to tell because the clients have all died and the caretaker cannot move on to others because of her own small death of burnout, another of trauma's insidious forms.

The last two "gifts," in stories that focus on Margaret and Connie, are hope and mourning. Seeing the narrator's anguish about her illness, and in answer to the question of whether there is anything she can do, Margaret responds as follows: "She put her hand up to my cheek and I remembered the way

she'd touched my face that time she and I were with Rick. I felt her hand against my skin. She said, 'You can hope again' " (148). From the one who is sick, the caretaker hears that her own despair is something to fight, that hope is not an easy or false comfort but a vital resource. In a rare moment of self-revelation, she shares the news of Margaret's illness with her client Connie when Connie notices that something is upsetting her. Touched by Connie's sympathy and embrace, the narrator notes that "she said it as if she wasn't sick. She still made room to care about somebody else" (136). Connie dies surrounded by her children, content at least that they have outlived her, and that her slow death has allowed for a resolution in her relationships with them. *The Gifts of the Body* bears witness to that which has been given by those who have died, and it honors, as another gift or privilege, the knowledge that comes from the work of caretaking.

If *The Gifts of the Body* thus trafficks in redemption, it does so in an unusual way. It approaches the enormity of devastation locally, focusing on the caretakers as well as those dead, and acknowledging the significance of the task of taking care of even one patient for one day if giving oneself fully. Out of this material intimacy with people with AIDS, a distinctive form of witnessing to trauma emerges. The caretaker as witness takes on the pain of others while also experiencing it directly in ways that are material and sensual. There is no easy sentimentality about *The Gifts of the Body* or the caretaker it depicts; yet it is also a deeply affecting novel, producing feeling in a style reminiscent of *Stone Butch Blues*'s emotional untouchability, where the feelings are hard won because they are so often fended off in service to others. Attention to the effects of trauma on caretaking is essential and something these lesbian writers make vivid. They offer a more sober estimate of what it means to tend to the traumatized and the labor of working with and against burnout, which is also one of the hazards of activism.

Collectively, these three narratives queer caretaking in a range of ways. An activity that has traditionally been gendered as feminine is practiced in butch ways that avoid sentimentality, and also in some cases overt feeling, instead acknowledging that help is sometimes offered with difficulty and even grudgingly. Although these women are certainly nurturing, they are not at all maternal, not just because they are not family members but because they find other models for representing the intimacies of caretaking. Most prominent among these are modes of queer friendship and bonding that lend caretaking the intimacy of sexuality. The ways in which queers have reconfigured the body in sexual intercourse also transforms the relation between bodies that caretaking produces.

These narratives also serve as a form of testimony and reveal how even those who, as caretakers, might be seen as secondary to the AIDS crisis have an important story to tell. The same can be said of the activists, and the testimony of lesbians as both caretakers and activists is critical to the archive of feelings generated around the AIDS crisis. Juxtaposing these texts about caretaking with the ACT UP interviews helps to consolidate the status of the interviews as testimony.

[I taught a] gay and lesbian studies class last semester for a friend of mine, about ACT UP, and these were 90 percent young, out, gay and lesbian people, and a good percent had never heard of ACT UP. Those who had had very bizarre notions about what we had done, and it was really depressing. It was like, "Oh, my God, this was only ten years ago, and it's already gone from the public memory." Something has to happen here because they can't reinvent the wheel every single generation. (Kim Christensen)

We didn't even realize what we had created. We certainly didn't realize how ephemeral it was, because at a certain point many of us, for completely different reasons—or for many of the same reasons, but for our own individual reasons—started leaving. And all of a sudden, this friendship network and place that we would absolutely be every Monday night—these knowns in our lives—weren't there anymore. . . . There were lots of different reasons for leaving. But I remember there was a moment when Jean [Carlomusto] and I were looking back and saying, "Wow, that was really something." We really had created, out of nothing but willpower, this very, very special movement that had been home for many of us for a very long time. (Alexis Danzig)

Someone once said to me that the natural life span for any group like this was three years at most. So the fact that after four or five years, people started leaving seems to me a tribute, not a negative. . . . I think ACT UP was phenomenally successful. Phenomenally. (Ann Northrop)

One of the things we really were into in ACT UP was skill sharing; the idea that anybody could speak to the media. And how do you do that? Everyone gets marshal trained. Lots of people do cd [civil disobedience], and go through cd training. Lots of people do cd. That's an experience that most people don't have, and it's a transformative experience. People take that with them wherever they go, whether they work in other AIDS service organizations, or go back to school and do something—get their M.S.W., go to law school, or whatever. (Amy Bauer)

[ACT UP] gave me the courage to speak out. In my culture—and I'm not putting down my culture—but we're taught that women are to be seen and not heard. Children are to be seen and not heard. You don't speak back to a doctor, you don't speak back to your elders. That's the culture I came from. My grandmother was born in Puerto Rico and raised me. My mother worked, and she always enforced that in me. So I was stifled. But ACT UP gave me a voice, girl, and I haven't shut up since. (Marina Alvarez)

The whole experience was important. The whole thing. The good, the bad, the ugly. It was really, really important. I'm grateful that ACT UP existed because it gave me an opportunity to do things I never, ever would have been able to do. And I mean do things, not just meet with the CDC, and plan demonstrations, and change the AIDS definition, but do things with people, and have experiences, and have emotions, and have responses. I learned a lot about myself, and of course, developing close friendships at a young age with people who died was something I wish I had never experienced, but it's certainly—it's really interesting. People I know who weren't involved with AIDS activism, or didn't have a lot of gay friends, for instance, who died, who were my age—they're from another planet, and I'm from another planet to them, because of that experience. Some people say to me, "Oh, I haven't been to that many funerals." And they're my age. And I go, "Really? You haven't?" And I go, "Wow. That's right." There's another way that person could have lived during that time. I look forward to not going to any funerals for the next twenty to thirty years. (Tracy

Morgan)

Those people dying shaped my identity, and . . . I'm not that fazed by people dying anymore. . . . I don't feel like dancing around it or being tactful. People fucking die. And you know what? Most of the time it's ugly, and unfair, and sad, and devastating, and you can't replace them. There's a huge hole in your fucking heart, and it's not like it goes away. It kind of scars over, and you wait for the next blow. That's how I feel. In some ways I'm glad I'm not the handwringer about death. If my best friend died tomorrow, I would be wrecking the place. But I would also think, "That's the way it fucking goes." I guess I'm more attuned to misery, or the dailiness of misery. You think you're experiencing the most pain you've ever had in your life? Maybe in five years it's going to get a lot fucking worse. I'm not blasé about it. That's not it at all. I feel it all. I guess I'm more accepting of it. The dying thing. I cried so hard about it for so long. I haven't talked about it in a long time so it's a little upsetting now, but you get numb. You get a little numb. It's not even numb. It is what it is. It's not good, it's not bad. (Heidi Dorow)

There was a phrase from Tony Molinari's rap song he did for the nih [National Institutes of Health], which was, "If you don't like something, change it." I think one of the reasons why people don't organize more now is because—I see in my students this sense of cynicism and hopelessness; like, "Oh, we could never do anything about it." And I'm like—Yes, we didn't end the AIDS epidemic, but damn it, we changed the clinical trials process. . . . We changed the friggin' definition of AIDS. Right? Two demos at the CDC—whoops. Definition is changed. It's not that hard, if you just get your butts going. You can accomplish really amazing things. . . . And this harks back to the 1960s. We helped end the Vietnam War but we didn't end imperialism. Well, we helped end the Vietnam War, damn it. That's worth something. And legal segregation is over. It's not the end of oppression but it means something. (Kim Christensen)

I think for all the ways in which the movement fell short of what we really wanted, and for all the people that we lost, and for all the things we would liked to have changed that we didn't manage to change, I think that ACT UP really changed the way we live our lives today. I think it changed the way people think about AIDS and about health care. I think it opened up the whole discussion of health care in this country. And it opened up the whole discussion of sexuality and sexual identity in this country. And I think it also permanently opened a door where many people, millions of people, were able to see the links between different minorities and different, struggling groups of people. (Zoe Leonard)

To have a legacy is like a present. I think of Ray [Navarro] a lot as a reference for my ideas and experiences. I think about what he might have done in the same situation, where he might have gone with something, how he might have formulated a joke while walking down the street or watching a bad movie. And I do feel sad that he didn't get to work with his ideas for too long, that he didn't get to work them out. From what living the years since then has taught me, I can see that he was just getting started. I can appreciate the privilege of imagining what I want to make of my life and then getting to try out some of those fantasies for real. And there are times I wish it was him who was saying what he had done and not me imagining it. (Catherine Gund)

We went through these photos and we started laughing so hard. Half the people are dead, unfortunately. That's the sad part. But little details, like—this is just a classic. You don't need to put this anywhere, but it's just for entertainment value. We were in a paddy wagon. We had been arrested. We were on our way to jail, and David Falcone decides to give himself a manicure. He

whips out the little manicure thing, starts clipping his nails, fixing everything. I think he even had a hair tweezer for the nose. And David Gipp, who is very upright and Dutch, is in absolute shock at what he is seeing. And David Falcone says, "Well, we have a little while before we get to the jail, so let's get some personal hygiene taken care of." You could only have that kind of moment when you have a totally free group where any freak off the street can just walk in and say, "I want to fight AIDS." It's so brilliant. (Maria Maggenti)

At the outset of my inquiry, I was drawn to the idea that activism is not only a response to trauma but can itself be traumatic because of its emotional intensities and disappointments. It has its own losses that need to be mourned, and can also give rise to the melancholy of incomplete mourning. Furthermore, because the passage of time can bring backlashes or persistent problems that make one's activism seem in hindsight less effective, activism is always retroactively subject to such emotions. The interviews have ultimately challenged my thinking, however; as the above comments reveal, no matter how difficult their experience with ACT UP might have been, everyone involved can remember something important that remains, and they are emphatic about ACT UP's transformative power. When I have discussed my project's connections with trauma, some of the women I interviewed have been extremely wary, concerned about the pathologizing implications of describing their experiences as traumatizing and insistent on their activism as a way of moving beyond or warding off trauma. Danzig read the title of one of my presentations, "Legacies of Trauma, Legacies of Activism," as implying that the legacy of activism was trauma, and she was concerned that connecting AIDS activists with trauma pathologized them.[16] Northrop asserted that her activism was one arena in which she found refuge from the constantly traumatizing effects of life in an oppressive society. It was good for me to hear these remarks and tread cautiously so as to avoid the very problem of pathologization that I have been writing against. Yet I also want to be heard as arguing that if trauma is de-pathologized, then there is room for acknowledgment of the grief and ambivalence that might otherwise be resisted by activism for fear of debilitating despair or pathologizing diagnosis. I'd like to open up space in which exploring the emotional ambiguities and complexities of activism doesn't compromise or undermine its significance. But having focused on some of the ways in which love, grief, and conflict complicate activism, I'd like to recognize the feelings of hope and survival that activism promotes in the face of trauma. My sense is that some of the resistance that activists have offered comes from their awareness of the fragility of activism's histories, and their urgent need to insist on its value stems from the same archiving impulse that also drives my own inquiry.

As Christensen puts it: "It's funny because people think movements happen when there is despair, but they don't happen when there's despair, they happen when there's hope." Everyone with whom I spoke was enthusiastic and respectful of ACT UP's success, convinced that it made an impact not only on their own lives but the world at large. Even its ending is seen less as a failure than as the natural evolution of any political group. Some people left ACT UP while it was still in full force because they had to go on with their lives—going to graduate school, getting a paid job, getting older—but often the work they went on to do has been influenced by their AIDS activism, whether because they continued to work with AIDS or, as Bauer (who plans schedules for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority) points out, they took organizing skills with them.

Some people lasted until ACT UP's energy and numbers began to dwindle. Bauer describes her departure as analogous to leaving a longterm relationship:

I really felt at the end like we were going through the motions. Have you ever been in a relationship where it wasn't like you were fighting or spiteful or you couldn't take it anymore, it

was just like there was nothing there? . . . For eight years I had done every Monday, except when I was away on vacation. Every Monday night, and it was really freaky to come home on Monday nights and not go to meetings. But it was also a relief and felt like the right thing to do. I survived it.

And Christensen notes a similar response: "It just got too depressing to attend something that used to be held in Cooper Union because we couldn't all fit in the Lesbian and Gay Community Center, and now there's twenty people, half of whom are from crazy left-wing sects and want us to sign on to the Trots. . . . It didn't feel like it was worth it." Wolfe lasted until after the tenth anniversary, parting ways when the divisions in the group between treatment and medical issues and social-change work finally seemed intractable. As of this writing, Northrop continues to be affiliated with ACT UP.

But no matter how they left, the women are convinced of ACT UP's value. In some cases, they mourn the loss not so much of ACT UP itself as of a movement to which they can devote their energy and resources or through which they could manifest dissent. Especially for those who like direct action, such as Bauer and Dorow, only a broad-based public movement can address this need. And they miss the intimacy and camaraderie; Maggenti talked about never having the time to hang out and party the way that she used to with her ACT UP friends.

One really crucial gauge of ACT UP's impact on its members are their current lives, many of which show the influence of ACT UP even if they are not currently involved in activism. I was especially interested in following up on those doing cultural work. Gund continues to make political documentaries of all kinds, including work about AIDS such as the television series Positive: Life with HIV and Hallelujah! a feature-length documentary about HIV+ performance artist Ron Athey. Carlomusto and Rosett are working on the AIDS: A LIVING ARCHIVE™ project, and Carlomusto's recent videos, *Shatzi Is Dying* and *To Catch a Glimpse*, which will be discussed in the next chapter, show the mark of death on the impulse to archive. Lebow has made a range of videos, including Outlaw about transgender activist and writer, Leslie Feinberg, Internal Combustion about lesbians and AIDS, and Treyf, a Jewish lesbian autobiography. [17] Maria Maggenti went on from ACT UP to film school and then to making The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love, one of the breakthrough independent features about lesbians, although she is currently struggling to get another script made while she works as a New York-based Hollywood screenwriter.[18] Leonard consciously dedicates her energies to her work as an artist, much of which shows her interests in death, archives, and history.[19] As Leonard explains,

ACT UP and activism changed the course of what I began to make as an artist, and also made me very wary of and conscious of how I wanted to handle a career in the arts, what compromises I'm willing to make, a way I'm able to and willing to scrutinize the art world. The ways in which I've seen entities like the FDA [Food and Drug Administration] and the nih deconstructed have allowed me to deconstruct museum and gallery systems and understand what I want out of that, what I bring to it, what compromises I'm willing to make. I guess all I can do is quote Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who said, "I want a voice not a career." I think one of the challenges I learned in ACT UP that I brought to my art was— or is—how do I get my voice out into the world while still making my voice say what I want it to say.

ACT UP's vital work of defining cultural activism and exploding the boundaries between culture and politics provides an important perspective from which to view the sometimes unorthodox career paths of lesbian AIDS activists within the art world. They are carving out different kinds of careers,

combining activism with their artwork while resisting the gallery and museum system.

There are others who are doing social service and political work. Schneider is an AIDS lawyer; she refers to herself as an AIDS stalwart because she continues to work on HIV issues, whereas others whom she thought were more committed have moved on to other projects. Since leaving NJWAN in 1996, Banzhaf has worked as a consultant for a foundation that funds projects related to women and AIDS, and she is working on a history of the Feminist Women's Health Centers that she participated in during the 1970s. Anne D'Adesky has been editor of the nowdefunct magazine *HIV Plus* and has recently been organizing around AIDS as a global issue, including participating in the Action+Life collective to make *Pills, Profits, and Protest*, a video about transnational AIDS activism.[20] After being laid off from her position as director of the Lesbian AIDS Project at GMHC, Hollibaugh has done research on lesbians, drug use, and HIV transmission, and she is currently doing education and media at SAGE (Senior Action in a Gay Environment). Dorow has worked on welfare issues for the Urban Justice Center, while Wolfe continues to organize on many fronts. Some, such as Banzhaf and Dorow, talk about the tensions between activism and working in a social service organization, but all of them forge paths for combining the two. It also seems to me that those who were most interested in working on issues related to poor women and women of color are the ones who have stayed most committed to AIDS activism since that continues to be an area of tremendous urgency. The explosion of AIDS in poor and developing countries around the world has led to new forms of activism, including calls for debt forgiveness, a global AIDS fund, and licenses to manufacture AIDS drugs locally—all issues raised at the 2001 United Nations Conference on Global AIDS in New York. Members of ACT UP/NY and ACT UP/Philadelphia have been central in the formation of Health GAP (Global Access Project), a group devoted to global AIDS issues. As the AIDS crisis continues into its third decade, so too does AIDS activism.

Toward the end of my research, I began to ask people what they feared might be forgotten, and Morgan's comments about the harassment she experienced while in ACT UP, which was reminiscent of COINTELPRO, the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program directed against the Left in the 1960s, and Banzhaf 's thoughts about the 076 controversy were especially noteworthy:

> *The thing I find I assume will be forgotten is the COINTELPRO life experience that we had, and that it didn't end with the COINTELPRO. . . . I think it's really important for activist history for activists to know that within this group of largely middle-class, white people, in the 1980s and 1990s, that it happened there, too, and to not underestimate the power of the government opposing what you do. Because I think it's really painful for people to think about it, and I think the desire to pretend it didn't happen, even as it was happening, was really strong. Understandably. People were like, "I can't even deal with it." I was like, oh, God, I can't deal with it either, but we have to deal with it. We have to know. . . . I think understanding the surveillance that took place really can help people. Don't think it's all fucking roses—it's not. It's just not like that. If you really speak truth to power, then you can really get in trouble. (Tracy Morgan)*

> *I want the racism in the 076 stuff to be remembered, so that doesn't have to get repeated again. Because otherwise, the next group of white activists who are involved in something will do the exact same thing. And maybe if they can read about this when they're in a room with a bunch of people of color and some authority figures, they'll let the people of color actually have some say. So that's just one little example, but it's an important one. I think the history telling is really, really important, and I also really think . . . we're the best people to tell the story and if we don't tell it, it's going to be lost. Nobody else is going to write feminist history for us. The same thing is true of*

the lesbians in ACT UP. Nobody else is going to record that history except for other lesbians. (Marion Banzhaf)

These comments suggest that even the more difficult aspects of ACT UP's history are valuable to remember. Morgan speaks out against the amnesia that can prevail because of an unwillingness to acknowledge surveillance and link political movements across history. She offers a reminder of the high stakes of activism. Banzhaf makes a related point in asserting that the mistakes of one movement are crucial to remember in order to guard against similar mistakes in the future. Moreover, her observation that only those who were part of a movement will take the time to document it are particularly resonant for me in relation to this project.

My goal of using oral history to create a public sphere around the afterlives of AIDS activism has been largely successful. The interviews themselves and the process of collecting them ensure that activist history is not forgotten; it is revisited in these conversations in which we continue to sort out what happened and how it persists. The interviews are part of the work of mourning, which can also be a productive form of melancholy because mourning is not terminable when we keep the dead alive and with us. Gund, for example, continues to perform the work of mourning as she fantasizes about her friend Ray Navarro. Her comments about him in the sequence of quotations that begins this section emerged as the result of a conversation in which we edited the first version of her remarks to remove a sense of survivor's guilt that she felt no longer reflected her feelings.[21] She notes that in her ongoing fantasies about Ray, he is now the age he would have been if he had lived rather than the age he was when he died, and she considers this a step forward in the mourning process. She likes the idea that melancholy can make loss a resource, and thus, that holding onto Ray rather than giving him up in favor of the living can be something positive. Like the dead, memories of activism can also be kept alive as something that one has recourse to, even difficult memories such as those that Banzhaf wants to see remembered.

In *Femininity Played Straight*, Biddy Martin uses a story of mourning and trauma as the vehicle for a critique of queer theory. She describes her "hesitations about theories that elevate radical detachment, anti-societalization, and transgression to the level of a reactive sublime" and articulates her "belief in the importance of something as simple and basic as attachment, investment, even love."[22] In addition to articulating this claim theoretically, she makes it through an account of the death of her (straight) brother and her own grieving for him. She also makes use of the model provided by Peggy Phelan's account of Tom Joslin's film *Silverlake Life: The View From Here* (1993), in which Phelan uses the story of a gay man's documentation of his lover's death from AIDS to create a space for her own (specifically lesbian) fantasy and grief. Crucial to Phelan's argument is the claim that lesbians and gay men have a stronger relation to the death drive because of their experiences of the social death of homophobia. [23] Martin agrees, but also finds in Phelan's account room for an understanding of trauma that does not assume "an absolutely originary and constitutive violence to which all other traumas could be assimilated, nor any assumption that all agency can be reduced to compulsive repetition." [24] Hence, in addition to articulating the relation between trauma and attachment as a critique of queer theory, Martin also implicitly offers here a critique of approaches to trauma that have a tendency to assimilate all traumas to an epistemological structure of unknowability. One such approach is Cathy Caruth's model of "unclaimed experience," in which trauma is marked by its temporal belatedness, its failure to leave traces by which it could be directly represented and remembered.[25] Martin holds out for the specificity of individual trauma stories as a guard against the presumptions of rigid normative and antinormative binarisms; in the same vein, I

insist on the idiosyncrasies of activist life that are illuminated by oral history.

Martin's grieving for her brother (and love of her family) along with Phelan's imaginative use of *Silverlake Life* to provide a model for her own forms of melancholy can be connected to the accounts here of lesbians responding to AIDS as both activists and caretakers. The leaps of cross identification and fantasy that structure these affective processes of mourning and militancy offer a model for a response to trauma and AIDS that while it may resist sentimentality, is nonetheless full of affective power. Especially important, too, is the (theoretical) claim for specificity, for the experiential detail that comes from the story of a dead brother, memoirs of attending to dying friends, or interviews with lesbian AIDS activists that cannot easily be abstracted to produce a structural account of trauma. These forms of cultural expression—memoirs, novels, and interviews— constitute the unusual archive necessary to capture the queer bonds and affects of activism and caretaking. They offer a challenge to critiques of trauma culture as a sentimental culture. A different trauma culture emerges from the scene of AIDS activism—one that is not about spectacles of wounded helplessness but about trauma as the provocation to create alternative life worlds. The oral histories of AIDS activists propose new ways of representing and countering trauma—modes of response that do not oppose militancy to mourning or women's work of caretaking but instead glimpse within the material specificities of queer intimacy and love the structures of feeling that can build new political cultures.

I close with two moments from the AIDS activist archive that demonstrate the significance of preserving anecdote:

We had a hilarious time at one of these motels. We were starving. We had been working all day. We came back. I guess we were in Atlanta. We must have been in Atlanta. At that time (and it still is true) Domino's pizza— we never want to eat from there because the guy's a right-wing freak, right? So the only place you could order in from was Domino's Pizza. We had to have a big meeting about this. Everyone agreed. We just took a vote. We're not fucking getting pizza from Domino's. We're just going to wait until morning and get pancakes. We're just not going to have any dinner. Then, I'll never forget it. A bunch of us got hungry and the next morning, somebody comes running out of somebody else's room screaming, "I saw a Domino's Pizza box under their bed!" And sure enough, the Domino's Pizza box was sticking out. Everyone said, "We couldn't help it! We went ahead and ordered the Domino's pizza!" Now, only in that context would that be hilarious because there we were, all these flawed individuals, right? I mean, for me, as a storyteller, as a fiction person, these are the details that are so brilliant and so perfect. (Maria Maggenti)

Throughout ACT UP, I have these remembrances of the last time I would see someone. The last exchange I would have with them. Like Vito Russo. Vito was such a nice, kind, generous man, and by the time I got to ACT UP he was sick. He was pretty sick. We didn't really know each other, but we were friendly and I really liked him. I was in awe of him. He also was always very vocal about acknowledging the lesbians in the room, which I always thought was really dear and brave. He liked me, I think, and I remember once we were at an ACT UP meeting. It was either before the meeting or after the meeting, and he was in the back of the room, and he goes, "Come here, come here," and he took me out into the garden at the Center [New York's Gay and Lesbian Community Center], and he sat with me, and he was telling me, "You've got to keep doing what you're doing." He was dying. I actually don't remember what he said, but it was encouraging, basically, and he held my hand. And I was so afraid. I was afraid because I was in awe of him. I was afraid because I knew I was touching death. And I didn't have the skills—all this was too much for me. I didn't know how to deal with it. I just thought, "Don't say anything stupid," because I felt like a kid. I

mean, I wasn't a kid, but I felt like a kid. And I wasn't a very sophisticated person. I'm not now, anyway, but I really wasn't then, and I just didn't know what to do. It's only later that I really appreciate that moment. I didn't appreciate it then. I was just afraid. But I'm really lucky that happened to me. He was a great guy. He was an amazing man. And kind. Kind, kind, kind. I have a million stories like that. (Heidi Dorow)

These stories vividly reveal oral history's power to turn affective memory into public history. Gathering oral history is itself a form of mourning, a practice of revivifying the dead by talking about them and revivifying moments of intimacy that are gone. The loss of a movement and the loss of people are entwined now, even as new forms of activism continue. Moreover, because mourning is not punctual and need not come to an end in order to avoid pathology or overcome trauma, and because the dead stay with us, it is important to keep the historical record open.

7 In the Archive of Lesbian Feelings

Every lesbian is worthy of inclusion in history. If you have the courage to touch another woman, then you are a very famous person.—Joan Nestle, *Not Just Passing Through*

Perhaps to the surprise of those who think of both traditional and grassroots archives as an esoteric interest, Cheryl Dunye's 1996 film *The Watermelon Woman* elevates the institution to a new level of popular visibility by making fun of it. The archives are also a source of narrative drama in *The Watermelon Woman*, in which Cheryl (played by Dunye herself) becomes obsessed with uncovering the life of the mysterious Watermelon Woman, an African American actress who plays the stereotypical maid roles in old Hollywood films such as *Plantation Memories*. Through interviews as well as trips to libraries and obscure archives, Cheryl slowly pieces together the story of Fae Richards, whose offscreen life includes a romance with her white director, Martha Page (styled after Dorothy Arzner), a career as a singer in black clubs, and in her later years, a long-term lesbian relationship. Combining documentary with fiction, *The Watermelon Woman* weaves a visual archive of old photographs, film clips, and newsreels into its drama, simulating the look of these genres so well that it is hard to believe that Richards is Dunye's creation and not an actual historical figure.[1] The most accessible parts of the Richards archive are the materials that connect her to mainstream popular culture—Hollywood films, a relationship with a prominent white woman—and Cheryl at once cherishes these artifacts and searches for other evidence that would bring Richards to life as something more than a stereotype or marginal figure. As part of her quest, Cheryl makes the trip from Philadelphia to New York to visit the Center for Lesbian Information and Technology (CLIT). Novelist Sarah Schulman makes a memorable cameo appearance as the archivist who sternly informs Cheryl and her friend that the huge boxes of relevant materials are not filed or indexed because CLIT is a "volunteerrun" collective. When Cheryl discovers some of her first photographs of Richards in the boxes, she is told that they cannot be reproduced without the consensus-based approval of the collective, which only meets every other month. Not content to wait, she illegally documents the images with her video camera.

Zoe Leonard, The Fae Richards Photo Archive, 1993–1996. This photograph from the fictional archive is identified in the accompanying notes as "Fae Richards, Martha Page, and three unidentified friends at the Harlem Hotspot. 1933." Created for Cheryl Dunye's film, The Watermelon Woman, 1996, the archive consists of seventy-eight black-and-white photographs, four color photographs, and a notebook of seven pages of typed text on typewriter paper. Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery, New York City.

Those in the know would recognize CLIT as a parody of the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA), and while some might not find the joke funny, its humor can also be considered a form of respect and affection, demonstrating the important place of the archive in the lesbian popular imaginary. The actual LHA inspires the same devotion that draws Cheryl to Richards. Founded in 1974, the archives were initially housed in the cramped quarters of Joan Nestle and Deborah Edel's Upper West Side apartment, and stories of visits to their apartment's pantry, filled with documents in every nook and cranny, are legendary in accounts of LHA's origins, especially now that the archives have relocated to a more public space.[2] Conceived of more as a community center than a research institution, one of LHA's original missions was to provide safe space for lesbianowned documents that might otherwise be left to neglect or destroyed by indifferent or homophobic families. Since 1993, LHA has been housed in a Brooklyn brownstone purchased not through large grants or public funding but through many small donations from lesbians around the country. As a longtime LHA volunteer Desiree Yael Vester notes, LHA functions as a ritual space within which cultural memory and history are preserved.[3] The new site continues to combine private, domestic spaces with public, institutional ones, particularly because it occupies a building that was once a home: the downstairs living room serves as a comfortable reading room, the copier sits alongside other appliances in the kitchen, the entryway is an exhibit space, and the top floor houses a collective member who lives there on a permanent basis.[4] Visitors can browse through the filing cabinets and shelves at their leisure rather than having to negotiate closed stacks. Organized as a domestic space in which all lesbians will feel welcome to see and touch a lesbian legacy, LHA aims to provide an emotional rather than a narrowly intellectual experience.

Both LHA and its representation in *The Watermelon Woman* point to the vital role of archives within lesbian cultures as well as to their innovative and unusual forms of appearance. They

demonstrate the profoundly affective power of a useful archive, especially an archive of sexuality and gay and lesbian life, which must preserve and produce not just knowledge but feeling. Lesbian and gay history demands a radical archive of emotion in order to document intimacy, sexuality, love, and activism— all areas of experience that are difficult to chronicle through the materials of a traditional archive.[5] Furthermore, gay and lesbian archives address the traumatic loss of history that has accompanied sexual life and the formation of sexual publics, and they assert the role of memory and affect in compensating for institutional neglect. Like other archives of trauma, such as those that commemorate the Holocaust, slavery, or war, they must enable the acknowledgment of a past that can be painful to remember, impossible to forget, and resistant to consciousness. The history of trauma often depends on the evidence of memory, not just because of the absence of other forms of evidence but because of the need to address traumatic experience through witnessing and retelling. Central to traumatic memory is what Toni Morrison, in the context of remembering slavery, has called emotional memory, those details of experience that are affective, sensory, often highly specific, and personal.[6] Subject to the idiosyncracies of the psyche and the logic of the unconscious, emotional experience and the memory of it demand and produce an unusual archive, one that frequently resists the coherence of narrative or that is fragmented and ostensibly arbitrary. Memories can cohere around objects in unpredictable ways, and the task of the archivist of emotion is thus an unusual one.

Understanding gay and lesbian archives as archives of emotion and trauma helps to explain some of their idiosyncrasies or, one might say, their "queerness." They address particular versions of the determination to "never forget" that gives archives of traumatic history their urgency. That gay and lesbian history even exists has been a contested fact, and the struggle to record and preserve it is exacerbated by the invisibility that often surrounds intimate life, especially sexuality. Even the relatively short history (roughly "one hundred years") of homosexuality as an identity category has created the historiographical challenge of not only documenting the wide varieties of homosexual experience but examining documents of homophobia along with earlier histories of homoeroticism and same-sex relations.[7] As another legacy of Stonewall (itself an important and elusive subject for the archive), gay and lesbian archives have sought to preserve not only the record of successful efforts to combat homophobia and create a public gay and lesbian culture, but also the evidence from periods "before Stonewall" of many different forms of sexual public cultures. In the last decade in particular, there has been a marked historical turn as historians, documentary makers, and average citizens have been drawn to historicizing not just the politics of a gay movement but earlier generations of struggle that threaten to become lost history; they are affectively motivated by the passionate desire to claim the fact of history and acknowledge those who provided the foundations for the 1970s' gay rights movement. Contemporary queer culture has shown a particular fascination with the generations of the 1950s and early 1960s that immediately preceded gay and lesbian movement activism. [8] This trend is especially evident in the popularity of the documentary genre; the groundbreaking film *Before Stonewall* (1985) has been followed by an explosion of documentary film and video that has a ready audience at gay and lesbian film festivals.[9]

The stock-in-trade of the gay and lesbian archive is ephemera, the term used by archivists and librarians to describe occasional publications and paper documents, material objects, and items that fall into the miscellaneous category when being cataloged.[10] Gay and lesbian archives are often built on the donations of private collectors who have saved the ephemeral evidence of gay and lesbian life —both personal and public—because it might otherwise disappear. Publicly available materials that might not be found in libraries or other public institutions, such as pornographic books, short-run

journals, and forms of mass culture that are objects of camp reception, are preserved in these archives. Also collected there are personal materials, such as diaries, letters, and photographs, which assume additional archival importance when public cultures have failed to chronicle gay and lesbian lives. In addition to accumulating these textual materials, gay and lesbian archives are likely to have disproportionately large collections of ephemera because of their concern with sexuality and leisure culture as well as with the legacies of grassroots political activism. Thus San Francisco's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society of Northern California (GLBTHS) has items such as matchbook covers, the notepads available for exchanging phone numbers in gay bars, flyers for club events, personal photo albums, condoms packaged for special events, and vibrators. LHA has a collection of T-shirts with political slogans, the hard hat with a "lambda" sign on it worn by a lesbian construction worker, and posters from political and cultural events. Both archives also house the files of activist groups such as ACT UP and the Lesbian Avengers that include ephemera such as meeting minutes, publicity flyers for demonstrations, buttons, stickers, and financial records. Their principles of selection and inclusion are not the same as those of a public research archive that defines value according to historical or research interests. It is LHA's policy, for example, not to refuse any donation of materials that a lesbian considers critical in her life and actively to encourage ordinary lesbians to collect and donate the archival evidence of their everyday lives.

In insisting on the value of apparently marginal or ephemeral materials, the collectors of gay and lesbian archives propose that affects—associated with nostalgia, personal memory, fantasy, and trauma—make a document significant. The archive of feelings is both material and immaterial, at once incorporating objects that might not ordinarily be considered archival, and at the same time, resisting documentation because sex and feelings are too personal or ephemeral to leave records. For this reason and others, the archive of feelings lives not just in museums, libraries, and other institutions but in more personal and intimate spaces, and significantly, also within cultural genres. In addition to considering gay and lesbian archives as repositories of feelings, I explore here how documentary film and video extend the material and conceptual reach of the traditional archive, collating and making accessible documents that might otherwise remain obscure except to those doing specialized research. My examples are *Not Just Passing Through*—directed by Jean Carlomusto, Dolores Perez, Catherine Saalfield, and Polly Thistlethwaite, (1994)— which is about archives, including LHA, and Carlomusto's *To Catch a Glimpse* (1997) and *Shatzi Is Dying* (2000), which are about the loss of her grandmother and the loss of her dog, respectively.[11] These documentaries use the power of visual media to put the archive on display, incorporating a wide range of traditional and unorthodox materials, including personal photographs, videotapes from oral history archives, innovative forms of autodocumentary, and "archival" footage—including clips from popular film. Especially striking is their use of an archive of popular culture, one that is strongly visual in form, to create an archive of feelings. As a popular practice of archiving, documentary produces the unusual emotional archive necessary to record the often traumatic history of gay and lesbian culture.

Actually Existing Archives

The creators of grassroots gay and lesbian archives have frequently turned their houses into safe havens for history. Like LHA, San Francisco's Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California (now the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society of Northern California, abbreviated here as GLBTHS) started out at home. Founded in 1985, GLBTHS's collection was initially housed in a spare room in Bill Walker's apartment until it moved to a public location in the Mission District and then to its current, larger Market Street location. Even the extremely public James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center at the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) has its intimate dimensions; the beautifully designed reading room provides a sanctuary from the open spaces of the central library. The room contains only a fraction of the library's holdings in gay and lesbian culture, including its special collections, but it serves as a focal point, announcing the inclusion of gay and lesbian material in the public library's construction of knowledge. The history of any archive is a history of space, which becomes the material measure and foundation of the archive's power and visibility as a form of public culture. Insofar as their existence has been dependent on the possibility of making private spaces—such as rooms in people's homes—public, grassroots gay and lesbian archives constitute another example of what Michael Moon has called a "semipublic" sphere.[12] Each of the archives that preserves gay and lesbian history has a history that itself belongs in the archives because they have been formed out of the same queer and obsessional urges to collect that guide the makers of the documentaries to be scrutinized here, and the archives' histories are as emotional and idiosyncratic as their collections.[13] Moreover, as more institutionalized archives develop gay and lesbian collections, it will be increasingly important not to forget the more queer collections and strategies of the grassroots archives.

In addition to transforming notions of public and private space, gay and lesbian archives are an intriguing locus of debates about institutionalization and the tensions around assimilation in gay and lesbian politics. Over the last decade in particular, as some grassroots archives have moved toward funding and organization on a larger scale, and as a number of gay and lesbian archives and collections have been established in already existing institutional spaces, especially universities and public libraries (Cornell University's Human Sexuality Collection and the New York Public Library's [NYPL] collection are instances of this trend), the urgent necessity of the grassroots archive as the only source of information about gay and lesbian history might seem to have shifted. Negotiations between the GLBTHS and SFPL to share some of their resources and collections demonstrate, however, ongoing differences between grassroots and institutional archives even when they are in dialogue with one another.[14] Under this agreement, some of the GLBTHS's collection is housed at the SFPL so that it can be more accessible. (The GLBTHS is currently open to the public only on weekend afternoons because it is staffed by volunteers.) But there are differences in the materials to be found in each location; the GLBTHS continues to house sexually explicit materials, including many significant gay male pornography collections that would be controversial for the SFPL. And while the SFPL's efforts to fund-raise are dependent on acquiring the collections of celebrities, politicians, and other exceptional individuals, the GLBTHS remains committed to creating a populist archive that includes the possessions of ordinary people. This mission is especially crucial in order to avoid a disproportionate emphasis on middle-class, white gay men.

Will the two kinds of archives end up competing with one another? This question is especially relevant to funding. An archive's budget must pay not only for its collection but for space and access, including staff to receive visitors and, even more importantly to catalog the collection. Many

grassroots archives operate through volunteer labor, which limits the amount of time that they are open to the public and the amount of time devoted to organizing them. In the mid-1990s, the GLBTHS received a large bequest that made it possible to hire a full-time paid archivist for the first time. The SFPL also has a large endowment ($2.5 million) for special collections, but these funds are earmarked for acquisitions and cannot be used for staff. (Thus, although the inauguration of the Gay and Lesbian Collection was celebrated along with the opening of the new SFPL building in April 1996, most of the special collections—such as the papers of Randy Schilts, Barbara Grier, and Harvey Milk—were not available because they had not been cataloged.)

Another telling case is the recent history of the gay and lesbian special collections at the NYPL. Under the auspices of Mimi Bowling, curator of manuscripts, who has been sympathetic to building the collection, the NYPL has acquired a number of important archives. A major catalyst for the current visibility of its holdings was the 1988 acquisition of the International Gay Information Center (IGIC) archives, a communitybased archive that was started as part of the Gay Activists Alliance in the 1970s. Lacking both the space and labor to stay independent, IGIC offered its collection to the NYPL; the timing was good, coinciding with a period of strong gay and lesbian activism as well as a developing sense within the NYPL that building a gay and lesbian collection was a priority.[15] Since then, the library has focused on the AIDS crisis in particular and has acquired the records of ACT UP/NY, GMHC, the People with AIDS Coalition (PWAC), the art collectives Gran Fury and Fierce Pussy, and the video collectives DIVA-TV and Testing the Limits.

The significant differences between the NYPL and SFPL are immediately evident from the architecture of their buildings. Whereas the SFPL is housed in a new building whose contemporary design, open atrium, and intimate reading rooms convey spatially a democratic vision that the library is open to all, the NYPL is much more forbidding. Its four research collections are largely funded by private donations, a legacy of the founding of the library in 1895 by New York's rising aristocracy. The Astors, Carnegies, Rockefellers, and other families raised funds for a "public" library system, but also for a monument to New York City as a worldclass cultural and economic capital. Opened in 1911, after twelve years of construction, the main building at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street is in the grand style of nineteenth-century public architecture. The classical architecture and huge reading room are imposing, displaying on a massive scale the idea of tradition, which is being invented as well as preserved by the archive. Entry to the manuscript collection is available by special application only to those who have specific research projects; the research room, which is located off the main reading room, feels like a sequestered space for devoted, and slightly antiquated, scholars, in sharp contrast to the open airy feel of the San Francisco library.

Because the NYPL is such an important institution of power both within the city of New York and nationally, the NYPL's gay and lesbian archives can't help but be a crucial sign of success and visibility. The 1994 *Becoming Visible: The Legacy of Stonewall* exhibition, mounted in conjunction with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Stonewall riots, was a high-profile event that showcased the NYPL's growing collections. The huge title banner with a pink triangle incorporated into its design was displayed over the Fifth Avenue entrance, transforming the concept of "becoming visible" into a performative act. A popular success, the exhibition displayed photographs, posters, buttons, and other ephemera that surveyed gay and lesbian culture and activism.[16] Drawing on the considerable financial and spatial resources of the NYPL, the exhibit served as a way to make the archive visible and accessible, sending a message that gay and lesbian history is worthy of inclusion in the halls of power. The exhibit's impact for spectators derived in part from the unusual juxt a position of gay and lesbian content with the traditional exhibition space. A book based on the exhibit has further extended

its reach to wider audiences and made the materials more permanently accessible.[17] Mimi Bowling suggests that these methods of making the library's gay and lesbian collection public are a way of guaranteeing ongoing funding for its preservation and maintenance.[18]

There were some critics of the Becoming Visible exhibit, though—most notably those with ties to LHA, which donated materials to the exhibition but had a tense relationship with it. Among the points of contention were the lack of sufficient acknowledgment of materials from sources other than the NYPL, including LHA, and a warning sign about sexually explicit materials placed at the entrance to the exhibit. Polly Thistlethwaite suggests that the NYPL's self-congratulatory relation to the exhibit masked its dependence on community-based archives such as the IGIC, without which it would not have had the materials for the exhibit: "The *Becoming Visible* exhibit was willfully framed to appear as though it had been berthed [*sic*] from the stacks, archives, native savvy, and magnanimous goodwill of NYPL, doing a magnificent honor for gays and lesbians, deprived yet deserving of mainstream recognition."[19] She sees the NYPL as falsely representing itself as having an extensive history of collecting gay and lesbian materials, when in fact its holdings were not until recently cataloged or publicized as such.

Maxine Wolfe, one of the ACT UP members I spoke with, talked at some length in her interview with me about her involvement with the LHA, where she has been a longtime volunteer. In addition to corroborating Thistlethwaite's account of LHA's relation to the NYPL exhibit, Wolfe discussed her objections to the donation of ACT UP/NY's files to the NYPL—an argument that she made publicly at ACT UP meetings when the decision was deliberated. She claims that there is no safety for gay and lesbian materials in a publicly funded institution, in contrast to the dedicated mission of LHA, where no one will suddenly decide to defund or de-accession lesbian and gay materials. Scoffing at the notion that the NYPL is a more secure location, Wolfe explained to me in her interview, "Let me tell you about security—it means that when there is a fire, someone wants to save your papers. At LHA, there are twenty-five women who would put lives on the line to save that stuff." She is a strong advocate of the independent and separatist stance of LHA, and her convictions serve as a reminder that recognition and inclusion by traditional institutions should not be the only model of success for gay and lesbian archives.

Yet despite the reservations expressed by those at LHA, other queer activists have been able to find a home for their materials at the NYPL. Another valuable case of collaboration between traditional public institutions and grassroots archives is the example of the library's Royal S. Marks Collection of AIDS Activist Videotapes. The collection was assembled with support from the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS, whose mission is to preserve the grassroots response of artists and activists to the AIDS crisis, and which provided funding for the duplication of one thousand hours of videotape in order to make it accessible to the general public. Central to this project has been the curatorial vision and labor of Jim Hubbard—a founding member of the mix Festival of experimental lesbian and gay film and video—who had a long-standing interest in making sure that AIDS activist video materials were preserved. In his view, the choice of the NYPL as a repository for the collection was an obvious one; only the NYPL had the storage space and conditions to be able to house such a large collection as well as the resources to make it accessible. The Royal S. Marks Collection was also made public through an exhibition in collaboration with the Guggenheim Museum in December 2000. In a series titled "Fever in the Archive," the Guggenheim screened eight video programs on a range of topics, including collective action, safe sex, drug use, women and AIDS, and organizing in communities of color. Watching AIDS activist videos at the Guggenheim Museum (with the exhibition of designer Georgio Armani's fashions upstairs in the main gallery space) was sometimes an odd experience, the

product of yet another strange juxtaposition of traditional institutions and grassroots activism. At a related panel discussion where activists and academics talked about the legacy of AIDS activist video, panelists Douglas Crimp and Alex Juhasz also expressed ambivalence about the experience of watching and revisiting the videos because they continue to be a site of loss and mourning.[20] Indeed, while any archive is haunted by the specter of death, its literal and traumatic presence in any AIDS collection serves as a vivid reminder that archives can be motivated by emotional rather than intellectual needs. For example, Hubbard describes the difficulty of getting some donors to contribute materials because of their sentimental value. Ray Navarro's mother continues to keep his videos in her home because they are like an extension of or proxy for his body and thus difficult to part with.[21]

One of the persistent values of grassroots and community-based archives is their capacity to keep the emotional need for archives at the forefront of their mission. LHA, for instance, remains a benchmark for the steadfastly independent archive, one that differs dramatically in its goals and practices from a research institution. Some of the principles that Joan Nestle articulates in "Notes on Radical Archiving from a Lesbian Feminist Standpoint" include: "The archives will collect the prints of all of our lives, not just preserve the records of the famous or the published, [and] the archives should be housed within the community, not an academic campus that is by definition closed to many women. The archives should share the political and cultural world of its people and not be located in an isolated building that continues to exist while the community dies. If necessary, the archives will go underground with its people to be cherished in hidden places until the community is safe."[22] Rather than taking for granted the principles of legal entitlement and viability for research and the need for funding that govern the acquisition process of many traditional archives, it is important to keep the model of LHA in mind as a challenge to these accepted notions.

Especially influential in the planning and maintenance of LHA is the notion of safe space that has been so central to lesbian feminist communities. A mistrust of public institutions runs deep in the mission of LHA. LHA is more interested in fostering a lesbian public sphere than in appealing to a general public sphere, and thus the model of success represented by the NYPL's collection has no meaning in this context. Instead, there is an interest in making archival skills more accessible to all: "The archives should be staffed by Lesbians so the collection will always have a living cultural context. ArcHIVal skills shall be taught, one generation of Lesbians to another, breaking elitism of traditional archives." Indeed, information about the archives is passed on orally by the volunteers who staff the open houses and guide its visitors. "Its atmosphere must be nourishing, entry into our archives should be entry into a caring home." Rather than being a specialized domain for experts, LHA is a welcoming sanctuary. Yet the involvement of professional librarians such as Thistlethwaite, Lucinda Zoe, and Desiree Yael Vester in the running of LHA has also sparked debates among those on the archives board about whether it should adopt a more formal cataloging system or develop ways of acquiring permissions from contributors so that the collections can be used more easily by researchers. LHA continues to evolve, creating new forms of archive that combine traditional practices with a lesbian feminist vision, but it will always be a distinctive space because of its commitment to challenging the conventions of the traditional archive.

NYPL curator Mimi Bowling herself insists that there will always be room for both the grassroots and traditional archive, that they each have roles to play, and that they can work in tandem with one another.[23] As the number of archives of all kinds increases, it will be interesting to watch how the collaborations and tensions are played out.[24] For example, fundraising has begun for a National Museum of Gay and Lesbian History, which if it is ever built, would certainly signify the visibility of

gay and lesbian history within the national public sphere of archives. But there will always be a special place for the community archive, in part because it appeals to the emotional need for history. Moreover, it will continue to be important to challenge what counts as national history and how that history is told. In order to pursue further the significance of an archive of feelings, I turn now to another important genre of experimental and emotional archive—documentary film and video, which, in its ability to make vivid the centrality of feelings to the archive, has much to offer to museums and libraries.

The Archive of the Archives

One of the ways that documentary film and video expands the archive is by documenting the archive itself. For instance, the video *Not Just Passing Through* opens with footage from the inauguration of the new LHA space in Brooklyn.[25] Composed of a series of four loosely connected episodes, *Not Just Passing Through* documents the importance and challenges of preserving, representing, and communicating lesbian history, which as Nestle puts it in an interview in the video, has often been "[wrested] from piles of garbage." One segment of the video offers a tribute to the life of African American lesbian Mabel Hampton, who had close ties to LHA; another tells the story of Marge McDonald, who willed her personal "woman-related" papers to LHA, which had to rescue them from the clutches of a family bent on destroying the evidence of their daughter's lesbianism. McDonald was confident enough of the historical significance of her everyday life that she had taken the time to retype her handwritten diaries in order to make them more accessible. The other episodes focus on the Asian Lesbians of the East Coast, an organization inspired by the model of LHA to document a lesbian presence within Asian history and an Asian presence within U.S. history, and New York's wow Cafe theater collective, which, as a center for lesbian performance, is also, like LHA, a locus for the formation of lesbian publics. Like the slide shows that LHA presents in order to tour its collection across the United States for the benefit of those who cannot come to New York, *Not Just Passing Through* expands the reach of the archive, using video to make its stories public. One goal of the slide shows is to facilitate the formation of community, including the creation of local archives, and documentary video and media serve a similar function, especially when distributed through film festivals and other venues that create visible publics.[26]

Not Just Passing Through's episode about Hampton, for example, demonstrates LHA's distinctiveness as a grassroots archive and makes one of its most important contributors more visible. Hampton had close personal ties to LHA cofounder Nestle, and she not only was involved in the formation of the archives but served as something of a matriarchal mentor for the project of preserving history across the generations. As an African American woman who came of age in the 1920s, she is one of the crucial voices documented in LHA's oral history archive.[27] *Not Just Passing Through* not only includes footage from this video interview, thereby circulating it more widely, but also includes testimony from Nestle, Jewelle Gomez, and other younger lesbians about Hampton's significance to them. Like the volunteers at LHA who provide oral history as they guide visitors through the collection, this video segment activates the archive, bringing its significance to life. Serving also as a memorial to Hampton after her passing, the segment ends with a vivid contrast between the official history recorded in her *New York Times* obituary—she had no immediate survivors—and footage from a memorial in which Gomez reminds those assembled that "we are Mabel's immediate survivors."

Especially notable in the segment is Hampton's account of her pulp fiction collection, which is given pride of place in LHA's main reading room. Pulp fiction may seem to be primarily a document of homophobia unless it is recognized as evidence of lesbian existence for consumers in the 1950s and 1960s who had no access to a lesbian public culture.[28] It resembles celebrity culture, whose ostensible heteronormativity can be queered by the machinations of reception and fandom. The archive of lesbian emotion must include materials such as Hampton's pulp fiction collection, and it is crucially supplemented by videos such as *Not Just Passing Through*, in which Hampton's oral testimony explains the significance of the collection. Sentimental value is taken seriously as a rationale for acquisition in the gay and lesbian archive.

Equally suggestive of the role of popular culture and affect in the archive is *Not Just Passing Through*'s final segment on New York's wow Cafe theater collective, which like so many forms of live performance culture, is in danger of going undocumented. The episode adds wow to its list of archival institutions, as a place in which a lesbian culture is generated and rendered visible; more than just a theater, wow has been a gathering place for lesbians to work collectively to create a public culture. Special attention is given to the work of the Five Lesbian Brothers, one of the many theater groups and performers, along with Split Britches, Holly Hughes, Reno, and others, to be fostered by wow. In addition to including clips from theatrical productions such as *Brave Smiles* and *Voyage to Lesbos* (thus increasing the reach of live performance, which is often difficult to see outside of New York), the segment includes interviews with the Brothers, who explain that their work challenges the assumption that lesbian culture should provide positive images. Instead, they draw on an archive that includes stereotypical images of lesbians from classic melodramatic films such as *Mädchen in Uniform and The Children's Hour*. Mainstream representations that leave lesbians sad, lonely, or dead have become part of the archive of lesbian culture—a repository that is drawn on and transformed in the Brothers's hilarious and campy reworking of these films in their play *Brave Smiles. . . . Another Lesbian Tragedy*.[29]

Like the Five Lesbian Brothers's plays, *Not Just Passing Through* and LHA embrace the archive of popular culture, even when it is homophobic, inventing an archival and documentary aesthetic that is more interested in preserving affect than in collecting positive images. Inspired by the Five Lesbian Brothers's strategies, I take the fan as a model for the archivist. The archivist of queer culture must proceed like the fan or collector whose attachment to objects is often fetishistic, idiosyncratic, or obsessional.[30] The archive of lesbian fandom and fantasy would need to include, for example, pinup photos, gossip, film clips, and other memorabilia that serve as the material evidence of fan culture. The fan cultures that queer certain stars or the use of pulp novels as an indication of the existence of homosexuality are historical practices whose story is not wholly told by the objects and persons in and around which these forms of reception take place. In considering fantasy's place in the archives, this chapter foregrounds the role of popular culture in documentary film and video because it reveals how, in the archive of lesbian feeling, objects are not inherently meaningful but are made so through their significance to an audience. Like the arbitrariness and ephemerality of the connections between feelings and objects, and especially between traumatic memories and objects, the queer dimensions of popular culture's presence in the archive are unpredictable because they are so often not intrinsic to the object. As well, the powerful presence of popular culture in the archive of lesbian feelings offers models for the necessarily queer process of documenting forms of trauma.

Archives of Mourning

A passion, verging sometimes on obsession, for the archives pervades the video work of Jean Carlomusto. She has had a rich career as a media activist, including her work with the Testing the Limits collective and ACT UP's DIVA-TV collective, and as coproducer of GMHC's Living with AIDS cable series.[31] Her other documentary videos extend her activist interests to show the wide range of ways that the everyday life of lesbian culture warrants documentation. For example, *L Is for the Way You Look* documents the formation of lesbian community around gossip and fandom by chronicling the story of Dolly Parton's appearance at a P.S. 122 performance in New York by lesbian comic Reno.[32] And in addition to having a connection to the LHA through working on *Not Just Passing Through*, Carlomusto also assembled a compilation tape from the LHA video archives that screened at their twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in 1999.

Carlomusto's two most recent videos, *To Catch A Glimpse* (1997) and *Shatzi Is Dying* (2000) construct a trauma archive, using documentary to stage an encounter with death. In *To Catch A Glimpse*, Carlomusto gathers oral histories from her mother, aunts, and uncle to investigate the secret of her Italian American grandmother's death from a botched abortion. *Shatzi Is Dying* documents the death of the dog Carlomusto shares with her girlfriend Jane Rosett, a photographer who has documented the AIDS crisis and a founding member of PWAC, but it is also a meditation on the long-term effects of living and working in close proximity to the AIDS crisis. These videos forge an unusual archive, one that includes interviews, family photographs and home movies, archival footage, cultural theory, and popular music and film. Taking her cue from Hollywood and its queer camp reception, Carlomusto uses documentary video's archiving capacity to create fantasy, and she facilitates memory and mourning by aiming for affective power rather than factual truth. Not only does her evolving body of work extend the concerns of the last chapter by showing the influence of AIDS activism on cultural production, it also provides a model for an archive of feelings and for documentary making as a practice of mourning.

While the deaths of a grandmother and a dog might seem somewhat distant from the concerns of a gay and lesbian archive, Carlomusto's projects are crucially informed by the challenges of lesbian and gay history. In *To Catch a Glimpse*, she says, "Piecing together an identity has taught me how to look for what's hidden, to see beyond public definitions, to pay attention to the specific conditions of history, culture, and location that permeate the way we live and die. Searching for a hidden history isn't new to me; all of my identities are fragmented and scattered." These comments accompany her trip to New York's Municipal Records Office, where she goes in search of the death certificate that might tell her more about her grandmother's mysterious death, the details of which remain vague and conflicting in the oral history accounts of her mother and aunts. Although the official document does yield some further evidence, naming an ectopic pregnancy as the cause of death, this information is unreliable since the wording might have been designed to ward off an inquest that could uncover the illegal abortion. In the end, Carlomusto is left to construct her own version of history, and she declares in her video that "I've come to the point where I believe that truth is a hunch, a very strong hunch, and everything else is just words."

Carlomusto's tool for exploring her hunches about her hidden family history is her camera. *To Catch a Glimpse* opens with one of the first home movies, the 1896 cinematograph footage of inventor Auguste Lumière with his family. The voice-over that accompanies this moment in film history declares that "when these cameras are made available to the public everyone will be able to picture those who are dear to them, no longer as static forms but with their movements and their

familiar gestures, capturing the speech on their very lips. Then death will no longer be absolute." The video then segues from this historic moment to home movie footage that features Carlomusto herself and her family; she explains that her uncle brought the movie camera as a gift one Thanksgiving and that she fell in love with the magic of projection, which could turn her mother and aunts into the equivalent of movie stars like Rosalind Russell, Grier Garson, and Judy Garland. Although there was no camera present when she first heard about her grandmother's death from a botched abortion at another Thanksgiving gathering in 1981 when she was twenty-two, she decides that she will uncover the history behind the "secret that was given to me." In the gossip and storytelling of the holiday table lies an important history, and the camera, with its capacity to make death less "absolute," allows Carlomusto to gain access to the past. This opening sequence of *To Catch a Glimpse* establishes the links between cinematic technology, the archive, and death, suggesting the power of the moving image, stronger even than that of the still photograph, to preserve familial affections.[33] Carlomusto also insists on the importance of the intimate genre of the home movie within film (and video) history, by linking her own home movie footage not only to Lumière's early experiments but to the Hollywood star system that her mother and aunts recall. Like the founders of the LHA, Carlomusto understands that no document is too modest for inclusion in the historical record, and her cinematic sensibility leads her to explore the powers of the moving image for creating an archive.

Home movies from Jean Carlomusto's To Catch a Glimpse. From top to bottom: Auguste Lumière in one of the first home movies; Carlomusto in a home movie; the wedding scene from Stella Dallas; Carlomusto and her mother watching Stella Dallas; and the family portrait of Carlomusto's grandmother, Rocca.

With camera in tow, Carlomusto collects the testimony from a traumatic history, a history that resides within her own family. Acting as a version of an insider ethnographer, she welcomes the opportunity to get closer to her mother and aunts by asking them what they remember about their mother's death. Sitting around the kitchen table, the women tell stories that are the stuff of oral history, prompted to share their memories by Carlomusto's questions, her camera, and family photographs. Each family member has a distinct personality—her aunt Lee is funny and outspoken, while the oldest sister Mary, who was left to take care of the family, is more circumspect, and Carlomusto's mother, who was very young when her own mother died, has only vague and fragmented memories. Despite Carlomusto's closeness to her subjects, however, recovering a traumatic moment from childhood that might have been actively suppressed is not easy. At one moment, her mother breaks down when she starts to talk about the day her mother Rocca died, and the footage abruptly breaks off. As my experiences interviewing AIDS activists (including Carlomusto herself) also indicates, the process of using interviews to document the emotional life of trauma must sometimes include the respect of silence even, or especially, when the interviewer is an insider and a family member.

Aunt Lee observes that "even today when I go to a funeral parlor and see somebody laid out it's never real to me. It's real after I leave. Death is not real until you walk away from it and you don't see them anymore. Then it sets in." The story of young children left to fend for themselves emerges in fragments. Gradually, the details of the day Rocca was taken to the hospital and the day she was buried begin to accumulate, and Carlomusto uses dramatic black-and-white footage of an ambulance on its way to the hospital to capture the emotional, if not the literal reality of her death. More vivid than concrete memories of the actual events are the emotional memories that convey a sense of traumatic experience, such as Mary being told by her mother that she wished she could see her wedding or Rose running from the room in which her dead mother is laid out. Something that might never have been told but by accident of drunkenness or eavesdropping slipped out, and now a granddaughter searches for the truth. Yet the truth includes a secret, and part of what she documents are the aftereffects of maintaining secrecy.

What does it mean for a forty-five-year-old Italian American woman to have had an illegal abortion in 1939? What emerges around the secret of Rocca's death is a history of working-class Italian American immigrant life in the twentieth century. The family arrives via Ellis Island and then moves to the developing suburbs of Queens, first Long Island City and then Woodside. The sisters talk

about school, the movies, and dating; their older half sister Tessie also speaks of working in the sugar factory. Alongside upward mobility is racism and poverty; the sisters laugh about how little they had to eat. Compounding the loss of the mother who might have taught them Italian is the loss of another country and language. "My family has changed so rapidly over the last eighty years, it's hard to know where we come from." Carlomusto works to reconstruct that earlier history of life in Italy from the home movie footage of a trip with her family to what was "another world," her Aunt Tessie's stories, and archival newsreel footage of the arrival at Ellis Island and the Great Depression breadlines. Her family's story is not theirs alone; their anecdotes participate in a historical narrative of immigration that is marked by loss and hardship. Rocca's quest for an abortion is the dilemma of a poor working-class woman who has too many children and doesn't want another one. Her daughter Rose imagines with great understanding why she might have sought an abortion, and Carlomusto punctuates these Italian American and Catholic women's pro-choice position with footage of abortion rights protests. The secret of Rocca's death stands at the nexus of material histories of migration, class, gender, and sexuality, and in providing that larger context, Carlomusto both mitigates the effects of the secrecy and suggests that it creates a ripple effect that buries other significant histories.

A key figure in the search for the truth is Aunt Tessie, whom Carlomusto travels to Florida to interview. She hopes that Aunt Tessie, who is older and was born in Italy (as her grandfather's child by his first wife), will have more direct and vivid memories of the circumstances surrounding Rocca's death. Aunt Tessie is Carlomusto's closest link to the past since Carlomusto's Uncle John, who told his sisters about the botched abortion, is dead. But Tessie maintains that Rocca died of a hemorrhage, claiming no knowledge of the abortion story. Reaching the limits of oral testimony and the search for truth, Carlomusto switches documentary strategies and embarks on the construction of fantasy instead. She reconstructs her Aunt Tessie's story about the great-grandfather who struck the pear tree on Christmas Eve in anger at its barrenness only to have it bear fruit the next year. Playing the role of the great-grandfather herself, Carlomusto uses period costume and black-and-white footage to turn her family's history into a movie. As a cross-dressing butch lesbian, Carlomusto enters and revivifies the historical past, closing the gap that separates her from it while also openly acknowledging her version as a reconstruction or fantasy. She clings to the story because it represents "an omen about how the past could become apparent and could be savored." The past not only comes alive in Aunt Tessie's myth-making oral history but in Carlomusto's use of video to re-create it.

In fact, film and fantasy are central in this video's archive of feelings. Carlomusto contrasts Aunt Tessie to her sisters by noting that "while my other aunts always told me about film plots and movie stars, Aunt Tessie creates the family mythology out of her memories." But rather than privileging oral history over movies, Carlomusto fuses them. She takes seriously what her aunts have to say about their relation to the movies, recognizing the importance of their everyday experiences as spectators to their life histories. Carlomusto has learned to love the movies from her aunts, who turn to them as escape from the hardships of working-class life. Hollywood film fills in for historical gaps, substituting for the losses of cultural dislocation and secrecy. Carlomusto's mother, for example, tells the story of seeing *Balalaika* three times and being hauled home from one screening by her older sister. Carlomusto includes footage from *Balalaika* in which the star visits her mother's graveyard to tell her that she has just realized her dream of becoming an opera star; one imagines the sentimental power of the film for a daughter who has lost her mother at a young age, and the footage serves as a documentation of the emotional life that her mother can't necessarily speak of directly. In a crucial scene at the beginning of *To Catch a Glimpse*, Carlomusto and her mother watch another famous maternal melodrama, Stella Dallas, crying together over the ending in which Stella (played by

Barbara Stanwyck) secretly watches her daughter's wedding from the street outside because she has given her up to her upper-class stepmother. Carlomusto includes Hollywood melodrama in her archive as a document of the emotions generated by stories that cannot be told and secrets that will never be uncovered. The film clips become part of her emotional archive, and just as they often testify to feminist and lesbian desires in Carlomusto's other videos, in this case, they function as an archive of migration histories—another example of the documentation of transnational trauma discussed in chapter 4. [34]

Carlomusto plays her great-grandfather in To Catch a Glimpse. From top to bottom: a photograph

of Aunt Tessie from her album; the family portrait of her great-grandfather; Carlomusto as her greatgrandfather; Aunt Tessie telling the story; and Carlomusto as her great-grandfather.

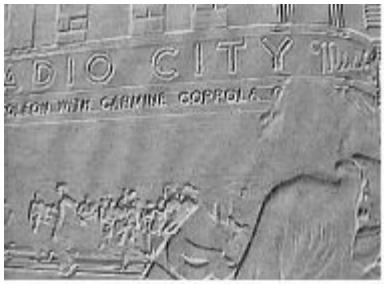
"I get attached to certain images," remarks Carlomusto in explaining the power for her of the family portrait that belonged to Rocca and that now hangs in her own living room. The photograph that Rocca obviously cherished because she had it hand tinted is not just a document of what Rocca looked like; it is also part of an affective archive. This image and others, made even more vivid by her aunts' oral histories, are Carlomusto's access to the past, allowing her "to catch a glimpse" of Rocca. The family photographs are so resonant that Carlomusto, experiencing what Marianne Hirsch has called "postmemory," wonders if she remembers the past directly or through them.[35] In the absence of the truth, the photographs, home movies, and films of popular culture, as well as contemporary reconstructions of them, become trauma's archive.

A Storehouse of Sacred and Magical Items

When Carlomusto declares in *To Catch a Glimpse* that truth is a "strong hunch," she is watching a Judy Garland film. Garland appears in *Shatzi Is Dying* too, in footage from a Stonewall 25 celebration in which the Radical Faeries, the group that merges hippie and gay male cultures, staged the death of Garland and paraded with her dead body through the streets of New York, using a ritual to bring her back to (dead) life. They commemorated Stonewall through its association with her death, creating a mourning ceremony that was fitting for both politics and emotional catharsis. *Shatzi Is Dying* shares this approach to the work of mourning in its documentation of the death of a dog—one of two Dobermans with whom Carlomusto and her lover Rosett live because they like having not pets but "animals in the family." The video risks sentimentality by daring to take seriously the death of a dog and the intensity of the relationships between lesbians and their animals. It uses Shatzi's death to explore queer love and the unusual forms of mourning it engenders, including the documentary strategies the video itself exemplifies. For *Shatzi Is Dying* is also a video about AIDS; Carlomusto and Rosett have a house in the country with dogs because they are both burned out from the AIDS pandemic, and it's "either a padded cell or a room with a view." Their home is also an archive; in a climate-controlled space in the basement are stored the results of their work as a videomaker and photographer. "We live in a house cohabited with the dead." Death is an everyday presence in their lives whether it's Shatzi's uncertain health or Rosett's photograph of their friend Ray Jacobs, taken just before his death, lying on the breakfast table.

In addition to documenting Shatzi's life and death via a series of lyrical segments that follow her through the seasons, Carlomusto includes commentary from others that explains the integral relationship between lesbian identity and pet ownership. Holly Hughes claims that lesbians fall into three categories, "the cat lesbian, the dog lesbian, and the one with asthma," adding that admitting you hate animals is the equivalent of saying you're a member of the Hitler Youth. On a more serious note, poet and writer Gerry Gomez Pearlberg argues that pets are associated with the unconditional love that "for gay people has been particularly hard to come by in our families"; that their close connection to the essence of life and hence spirituality also links them to sexuality; that they are close to mortality because they don't live as long as humans; and that they are a "touchstone for that very tender place in our heart where we experience loss or we experience mortality." Adding a touch of camp humor, she also asserts that pets are "the great underrecognized cruising tool" because they provide the perfect vehicle for conversation and do the flirting for you. *Shatzi*'s argument for the value of animal love complements the legitimation of queer loves that might seem excessive or inappropriate to others. And as Esther Newton points out, her relationship with her cat outlived those with many girlfriends. (Newton offers expertise not, as might be expected, because she is a professional anthropologist but because she is a devoted animal lover and friend of the family. As in *To Catch a Glimpse*, Carlomusto interviews those in her immediate circle of intimacy; the connection in this case is that Newton got Shatzi for Rosett when the two of them were girlfriends. Carlomusto's talking heads are expert witnesses by virtue of being both friends and part of the lesbian culture that she is documenting; even the girlfriend's ex is included.)

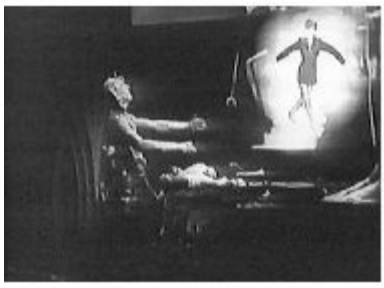
The archive at the breakfast table. In Shatzi Is Dying, Carlomusto and Jane Rosett look at Rosett's photograph of Ray Jacobs. Courtesy of Jean Carlomusto.



Carlomusto's ultimate object of investigation in Shatzi is not just animals but mortality and mourning, and to that end, she looks at different forms of spirituality. For example, she finds her own Catholic heritage to be an inadequate resource not least of all because the church's homophobia condemns her to an afterlife of burning in hell, and she searches for "more comforting views of life after death." Among the alternatives offered is the wisdom of Carlomusto's Buddhist teacher Sensei Pat Enkyo O'Hara, who suggests that to deny sickness and death is to deny the reality of the present,

and that "to be present to one's death, if you can do it, is a wonderful thing." Rosett talks about the Jewish tradition of lighting a *Yahrzeit* candle on the anniversary of her father's death, but she also mentions how disturbing this practice was to her uncle; as she recites the anecdote, we see old home movie footage of Rosett and her father as well as photographs of him in later life superimposed on the candle's flame. The visual sequence itself becomes a memorial to her father.

Especially striking visually is Carlomusto's treatment of her attraction to Egyptian traditions such as mummification, including the burial of the dead in their tombs along with all their possessions so that they are ready for life in the next world. An Egyptologist's description of these practices segues into a fantasy sequence (reminiscent of *To Catch a Glimpse*'s reconstruction of the fruit tree story) in which Dr. Jane Midol (played by Rosett) and her crew of archaeologists go on a mission to uncover the secret tomb of Queen Never-Tidy and King Not-for-Nuttin', which turns out to contain a stash of activist videos. This fictionalized scenario, in dramatic black-and-white imagery, is interspersed with footage from an early film spectacular that includes pyramids, pageants, and flying carpets. A classical facade dissolves into footage of a gay parade outside Radio City Music Hall, followed by scenes from other demonstrations. Carlomusto, drawing inspiration from the Egyptian tombs, describes these video clips as part of the "storehouse of sacred and magical items for their journey into immortality," articulating a sense of the archive as a site of wonder and awe. The sequence ends by linking Egyptian rituals to the queer pagan rites of the Radical Faeries, who each year celebrate Judy Garland, "goddess of the spirit of Stonewall"; the Stonewall 25 footage mentioned earlier is preceded by a clip of Egyptian burial rites (borrowed, according to Carlomusto, from early Italian cinema), on which is superimposed the same clip of Garland singing and dancing that was used in *To Catch a Glimpse*. The archiving and mourning practices of the ancient Egyptians along with the serious forms of scholarship that uncover them are used to legitimate gay and lesbian history as equal in stature. At the same time, the representation of Egypt through a spoof reconstruction of an adventure movie and footage from the cinema's camp archive legitimates archives that include popular culture and that are made meaningful through camp reception. Carlomusto's use of a range of kinds of footage and her willingness to indulge in fantasy provides a frame for the parade footage, indicating its emotional power for its queer audiences. It is not just an ethnographic document of a strange cultural practice; it is part of an archive of feelings in which the forms of queer cultural expression are cherished as precious—or "sacred and magical"— artifacts.



(This page and opposite): The storehouse of sacred and magical items in Zhatzi Is Dying 's archive, including footage from Stonewall 25, Egyptian-themed spectaculars, and Judy Garland films.

Moreover, the reference to the Radical Faeries's action is a dense one since their Stonewall 25 ritual was a form of counterprotest against the main 1994 March, resisting its assimilationist ambitions in favor of holding a Stonewall represented by camp, drag, and the moment in 1969 when Judy's "worshipers rose to insurrection." The ritual Carlomusto documented with her camera took place in Washington Square Park just after the Dyke March, another event that emerges from forms of disidentification with the Gay Pride parade. In 1994, an alternative parade began at the Stonewall Inn, rather than the official UN starting point, and marched uptown without a permit; the Radical Faeries joined activist groups, such as ACT UP, as part of that alternative contingent. Carlomusto's choice of this footage to represent the best of queer culture and history privileges an archive that provides evidence of ephemeral events and counterpublics that may not be visible in mainstream representations of a normalized gay and lesbian public.[36] The Radical Faeries's campy and flamboyant ritual, which combines mourning and play, provides a model for *Shatzi*'s unabashedly queer sentimentality; Carlomusto's preservation and making public of the archive that includes footage of their march enables them to serve as an inspiration to others. For Carlomusto, these documents of activism are "magical" and "sacred" artifacts, the locus of fantasy and emotion, not just historical fact.

Toward the end of the video, Carlomusto also shows some of the public funerals that have been invented during the AIDS crisis, drawing a link between mourning pets and mourning AIDS. "With all the misery and injustice in the world, how do you tell people that you're grieving over the loss of

your pet? I remember back in the 1980s when it was so hard to get anyone outside gay communities to acknowledge our grief. . . . That's why our ceremonies were so important. We knew deep down that we had to create our own rites and rituals if we were to truly honor and acknowledge our grief." As many others have done, Carlomusto acknowledges that mourning is different for queers and that the AIDS crisis has catalyzed a range of new forms of public mourning.[37] In another turn on the theme of mourning, Holly Hughes says in *Shatzi*, "I also mourn a gay community that was based around nonbiological family. . . . The energy that other people put into their children went into building community, and doing political work, and also into creatures that wouldn't survive them." A look at the practices of lesbian animal lovers thus offers a path to understanding alternative ways of life that resist heteronormativity and that build different kinds of affective public cultures.

Carlomusto's record of Shatzi's life is also a document of her domestic life with Rosett. Shatzi and their other dog, Rifkah, are integral to the rural life that has given them emotional solace from the AIDS crisis and a renewed commitment to life. Along with footage of Shatzi, we see Rosett, the devoted gardener, riding the tractor in the garden to the tune of "Blue Moon," and Carlomusto delightedly eating artichokes accompanied by Patti Smith singing "Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine." Loving Shatzi is part of loving the evidence of both life and death in the everyday world. Although she asks Rosett not to leave photographs like the one of a very sick Jacobs lying on the breakfast table, in her own way, Carlomusto finds methods of integrating her AIDS archive into the everyday life of *Shatzi* the video. In contrast to the photo of Jacobs, she incorporates footage of him as an organizer and activist, superimposed against the Kellogg's cereal box that is a visual representation of Carlomusto's memory of him eating cereal at GMHC staff meetings. Similarly, she uses DIVA-TV footage of Ray Navarro playing Christ at ACT UP's 1989 St. Patrick's Day protest to demonstrate the presence of heaven and hell in the basement archive. Her friends remain with her in video even if they are gone in life, and what was once documentary footage now becomes part of an affective archive, which is available to be reconfigured as part of Carlomusto's combined process of both living and grieving.

The video's final sequence shows Shatzi looking into the camera, panting, alive—a repetition of the footage that earlier accompanied the dogsitter's voice on the answering machine announcing her death. Video becomes an archive that acknowledges death and enables the dead to become a part of daily life. Lumiere's claim that the camera will make death less absolute seems to be realized by Carlomusto's video archive, and her use of the technology to create fantasies as well as documents enables the preservation of not just dead friends and dogs but queer lives. For Carlomusto, the video's final shot "gives us a chance to pause to appreciate evidence of our own existence in the act of breathing."[38]

Trauma's Archives

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida presses psychoanalytic approaches to memory to the conclusion that an archive is fundamentally impossible.[39] The absence of memory that marks traumatic experience is ultimately for him the logic of all memory, which fails to be archived even in the unconscious. Using examples ranging from Freud's mystic writing pad to e-mail, Derrida explores the mechanisms by which memory leaves its material traces or "impressions," and the arbitrary relation between the material object and the psychic life it marks. *Archive Fever* is interesting to read in the context of trauma studies because Derrida also considers, following Yosef Yerushalmi, the question of psychoanalysis as a Jewish science through a story about a Bible passed on from Freud's grandfather to his father.[40] The dependence of Derrida's argument on a father-son story suggests that the general theory of the archive is in fact situated within a culturally specific context.

The attempt to root psychoanalysis within a specific history gives way, however, to the force of Derrida's argument about the nature of inscription and memory. He is less interested in actually existing archives than in the general logic of the archive, although he does mention in passing that the archive is the site of contests over knowledge and power, and he pauses to consider the transformation of Freud's last house into an archive of psychoanalysis. Implicit in these references, though, are relatively traditional institutions, and it is thus worth speculating about the implications of an encounter between *Archive Fever*'s theory and the material specificities of more experimental grassroots gay and lesbian archives. Ephemeral evidence, spaces that are maintained by volunteer labors of love rather than state funding, challenges to cataloging, archives that represent lost histories —gay and lesbian archives are often "magical" collections of documents that represent far more than the literal value of the objects themselves. And Carlomusto's documentaries, which collate history out of personal collections, old movies, and sentimental objects, also confirm the status of the archive as a practice of fantasy made material. Queer archives can be viewed as the material instantiation of Derrida's deconstructed archive; they are composed of material practices that challenge traditional conceptions of history and understand the quest for history as a psychic need rather than a science.

The passion for the preservation of history that sustains the LHA and GLBTHS, even with slender material resources, can be compared with the archives and institutions that have been developed to remember traumatic histories. Holocaust testimonials at the Yale Fortunoff Archive and the Shoah History Foundation, as well as Holocaust memorials and museums around the world; the documentation of immigration at Ellis Island; an increasing number of memorials to the civil rights movement in the South, such as Maya Lin's memorial in Birmingham, Alabama; the Vietnam War memorials in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere—all of these sites preserve traumatic histories in ways that challenge the meaning of archive and memorial.[41] Trauma puts pressure on the institutionalizing force of museums and monuments as well as on the notion of an archive, demanding collections and installations that can do emotional justice to the experiences they remember. The results are frequently unconventional and innovative.

In the context of the challenges posed by trauma archives, it is worth considering the idiosyncratic and queer nature of gay and lesbian archives, so often collected according to sentiment and emotion. In contrast to institutionalized forms of cultural memory, the grassroots lesbian archive seems intimate and personal. It takes the documents of everyday life—oral history, personal photographs and letters, and ephemera— in order to insist that every life is worthy of preservation. Documentary film and video (as well as experiments in other cultural genres) push that enterprise still further, finding an unexpected range of materials that archive emotion and feeling.

One of the reasons I chose to place this chapter at the end of the book rather than at the beginning, where it might have served as a methodological guide to all of the chapters, is because it is so directly inspired by the AIDS crisis, which has had an indelible impact on the urgency and passion with which gay and lesbian publics have raced against death to preserve a record of lives and publics. Carlomusto's *Shatzi Is Dying* stands alongside Tom Joslin's *Silverlake Life*: *The View from Here*, Marlon Riggs's *Black Is*, *Black Ain"t*, and Gregg Bordowitz's *Fast Trip, Long Drop* as well as many other videos that transform the documentary form through their encounters with mortality. This encounter produces the archiving impulse, the desire to collect objects not just to protect against death but in order to create practices of mourning. A significant number of the activists I interviewed either have direct ties to LHA or cite it as a strong influence.[42] The specter of literal death serves as a pointed reminder of the social death of losing one's history. Thus, for example, Leonard's simulated photographs of Richards that provide the visual archive for *The Watermelon Woman* can be linked to her installations of fruit peels painstakingly sewn back together, which served as a memorial to friends, including Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS.[43]

"The Portrait Gallery" by Rosett and Carlomusto. Installation at the AIDS: A LIVING ARCHIVE™ exhibit at the Museum of the City of New York, 2001. Photograph © 2001 by Jane Rosett. Courtesy of Jane Rosett.

In addition, Carlomusto's mourning of both her grandmother and her dog is significantly influenced by her experience with AIDS. Her newest work, "The Portrait Gallery," created in collaboration with Rosett as part of their ongoing interactive multimedia project AIDS: A LIVING ARCHIVE™, incorporates their vast AIDS activist archive (including the clip of Jacobs that is included in *Shatzi*) into an altar installation.[44] The viewer stands in front of an altar of electronically lit votive candles, each one displaying the image of an AIDS activist; projected on the wall behind the altar is an image of a flickering candle accompanied by the sound of "Let There Be Light" being sung a cappella. (Rosett notes that "when an Italian and a Jew create an AIDS memorial, it's inevitable that they're going to burn a few candles."[45]) The viewer presses a button in front of one of the candles and activates a

brief video portrait (a clip) featuring the person whose image is on the candle; while the portrait is showing, all of the candles except for the one selected go dim. By incorporating the video archive into an installation that is charged with spiritual meaning, Carlomusto and Rosett acknowledge that the reception of the videos is an emotional process, and they give viewers an opportunity to acknowledge those feelings within the context of the museum. Hence, they address the challenge of many trauma archives: how to present archival material in a way that doesn't simply overwhelm or numb the observer. Their work indicates that it is not enough simply to accumulate archival materials; great care must be taken with how they are exhibited and displayed. The cultural knowledges embedded in forms such as documentary video and photography, performance, and installation art have much to offer as a resource for archives. Not only is "The Portrait Gallery" exhibited in a context that acknowledges its emotional power but the insistence on the archive as living reconstitutes the work of mourning and memorial. At the heart of the archive are practices of mourning, and the successful archive enables the work of mourning.

Thinking of the archive as a memorial to the dead, one that must perform the work of mourning at a personal level, is yet another reminder of why, however respectable certain kinds of gay and lesbian archives become, there will remain a need for grassroots and community-based archives. The importance of fantasy as a way of creating history from absences, so evident in queer documentary and other cultural genres, demands creative and alternative archives. In the case of both traumatic and gay and lesbian histories, grassroots archives and the archives preserved by cultural forms move past the impossibility of the archive articulated by Derrida toward collections of texts and objects that embody the sentiments and obsessions of archive fever.

Epilogue

With the exception of Dorothy Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina*, virtually all of the texts explored here don't have much visibility within the national public cultures of the United States, which is the home base for most of them; they circulate primarily within more circumscribed gay and lesbian publics. One of the goals of this book has certainly been to publicize these lesbian representations of trauma so that the contributions they can make beyond their more local audiences are more readily available. But my argument is not that lesbian experiences of trauma must be taken up as cases of national or U.S. trauma. In order to clarify that point, I'd like to consider some cases in which queer trauma has circulated within the U.S. national public sphere because they reveal that this kind of publicity is not always a measure of the successful incorporation of lesbian perspectives into trauma cultures or trauma studies. This discussion also provides another opportunity to take stock of the peculiarity of the archive of feelings and trauma that has been assembled over the course of this book—an archive that is not aiming to be the equivalent of those generated by more familiar sites of national trauma.

As an example of queer trauma achieving national visibility, I would cite how, in recent years, a gay rights political agenda has made hate crimes legislation one of its key platforms. Stories about violence against queers have been effective in drawing attention to the murderous consequences of homophobia; the implication is that homophobia's power to incite this kind of violence is traumatic. The death of Matthew Shepard, for instance, received massive coverage in the national media and was also a catalyst for a significant (but ultimately short-lived) moment of activism. [1] In addition to using violent death as a way of publicizing homophobia, the demand for hate crimes legislation also draws its rhetorical power from linking homophobia's effects with the fatal consequences of racism and other forms of discrimination. For example, the Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby in Texas has made hate crimes legislation its primary focus for many years because of a number of murders there of gay men, mostly, but the brutal racially motivated murder of James Byrd Jr. in Jasper, Texas, in 1998 brought additional and broader public attention to what is now called the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act, which finally passed in 2001. The political energy around hate crimes legislation is generated in part by identificatory outrage about the extreme and violent effects of discrimination. Murder offers irrefutable (and hence oddly satisfying) evidence of the horrible consequences of racism and homophobia, whose effects might otherwise seem more insidious.

I have reservations about the issue of hate crimes legislation because I worry that it is precisely those other more insidious forms of violence that will be obscured by a too exclusive focus on violent death. Must hate be criminal to be condemned? Or are there other forms of hatred that will never find

their way into the courts and that must also be the object of our cultural if not legal attention? In a critique of hate crimes legislation, Richard Kim notes that "it would allow legislators to appear to be doing something about homophobia without actually addressing its cultural roots. Meanwhile, beneath the national radar, local antiviolence projects focused on community organizing, outreach and education—efforts that attempt to stop gay-bashing by changing the social environment in which it occurs—are struggling with scant resources."[2] Violent crime sparked by racism and homophobia is shocking not only because of its own sensational excess but because it points to the existence of other, more systemic forms of violence that may not be traumatic yet deserve attention. It is important to look at the dynamics of how political and cultural representations structure the connections between hate crimes and more pervasive as well as systemic forms of homophobia, and to be alert to their discontinuities as much as their continuities. As some critics have remarked, the examples used to publicize hate crimes are often "innocent" victims such as Shepard—who was a white, middle-class college student—while the more everyday harassment of transsexuals, drug users, prostitutes, people of color, and homeless and poor people doesn't prompt the same sympathy. Thus, while attention to hate crimes can be continuous with attention to other pressing social problems connected to homophobia, it can also fail to do this work.

Does Boys Don't Cry Make You Cry?

Can a sensational and traumatic event, such as murder or violent crime, be an index of the more everyday forces of homophobic oppression? For me, that question is far more compelling and difficult to answer in the case of the death of Brandon Teena, who passed as a man and was brutally murdered in rural Nebraska in 1993, than it is with respect to the death of Shepard and the discourse of hate crimes. I'm particularly fascinated by this case because it has captured the cultural imagination enough to have generated a considerable archive, one that crosses over from fact to fiction to situate the events within the familiar U.S. popular genres of the crime story and romance. Two feature-length films have represented Teena's life and death: the documentary *The Brandon Teena Story* (1998) and the fictional *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), whose success with a general audience was underscored when Hilary Swank won a 2000 Best Actress Academy Award for her performance as Teena.[3] Before Teena got to Hollywood, though, the story of how s/he had passed as a man and been killed for it had already migrated from its Midwest locations in Nebraska to gay urban cultures, where it was covered by the *Village Voice* and Dyke tv, as well as to more general audiences, who were reached by John Gregory Dunne's 1997 *New Yorker* article.[4] The interest generated by Teena's story is quite remarkable, a notable instance in which a queer trauma story has reached the national public sphere.

One reason for the popular success of the story is its appeal to many different kinds of audiences. The case has somehow been haunting, even to those whose lives are quite different from Teena's, and despite the fact that he was not a model "innocent victim" but someone who had a criminal record, who deceived many people about his identity, and whose social milieu was poor and working class. His adoption of a masculine identity, his love of women, his experience of violence and secrecy, and his criminal and outlaw status are emotionally resonant, inspiring sympathetic identifications across the differences between rural and urban, working-class and middle-class, transgender and lesbian, and queer and straight identities. In Dunne's rendition for the *New Yorker*, the story becomes a classic U.S. crime tale in the manner of *In Cold Blood* (which of course had its own queer dimensions) with particular emphasis on the killers, John Lotter and Tom Nissen, and the question of what drove them to violence in America's rural heartland. Not to be underestimated as well is how the sensational and freakish lure of a woman passing as a man contributes to the story's appeal; writing about *Boys Don't Cry*, for example, Michele Aaron notes the tradition of cross-dressing and transvestite films in which gender play is ultimately used to reaffirm normative gender definitions. [5] As taken up by queer audiences, however, the story has been put to work in the service of larger social and political meanings. The result has been turf wars over who gets to claim Teena, particularly around the question of whether to read him as transgendered or lesbian. For instance, Donna Minkowitz's reading of Teena as a lesbian whose death might have been avoided if she had been able to come out as a butch dyke has drawn criticism for being transphobic and disrespectful of Teena's choice to pass as a man. Teena's life and death have coincided with a developing transgender activist movement, and especially a growing and more visible female-to-male (FTM) community. *The Brandon Teena Story*, for example, depicts the transgender activists, including Kate Bornstein, who attended the trials of Teena's murderers, thereby explicitly referencing some of the processes through which the case has become a queer cause. Although a reading of Teena as transgendered has come to prevail in queer discussions, the popularization of the case has depended significantly on its interest for lesbians (including the makers of the two film versions), hence my consideration of it here.[6]

I'm particularly interested in what the juxtaposition of the two films *The Brandon Teena Story* and

Boys Don't Cry—one presenting itself as a documentary; the other more explicitly a fictionalized account—can tell us about the deployment of trauma's archive. Like the documentaries examined in the previous chapter, both films use fiction and fantasy to produce an archive of feelings and to focus on what is emotionally meaningful about the story as opposed to what is factually true. Both of them aim to do the cultural work of exploring the broader social implications of a traumatic murder story from a queer perspective (where the word queer is especially appropriate to the convergence of lesbian and transgender concerns reflected in both films). The surprising crossover success of *Boys Don't Cry*, which emerged from the milieu of queer independent cinema (it was produced by Christine Vachon), makes it a good example of how a queer trauma story can reach a national public. The fictionalization of the story was a crucial move in appealing to a range of audiences, especially since narrative films have a far better chance of mainstream distribution than documentaries (and it's then possible to cast beautiful actresses such as Swank and Chloe Sevigny in the starring roles). I begin, though, from the premise that, as Toni Morrison says of *Beloved*, "facts" and "truth" are not the same thing, and thus that the fictionalized story of Teena is not any less equipped than documentary to tell us what we need to know. [7] It may take liberty with the facts in order to dramatize its version of what makes the story so emotionally and socially meaningful. Fiction can bring Teena to life in a way that documentary, which has to grapple with the absence created by Teena's death, can't. Freed from the need to be faithful to the facts, *Boys Don't Cry* constructs a romantic fantasy that resonates with the emotional dynamics of forbidden adolescent sexuality. As a tragic love story, the film lends vivid force to the fear and fantasy that the price of queer love, especially when openly declared, is often death. The film's turn to a transcendent and humanist romance has been problematic for queer readers, however, particularly since it coincides with the wishful construction of it as a lesbian romance; after Teena has been raped, his girlfriend Lana asks him to take off his clothes and let her make love to him. Whereas earlier scenes in the film used the creative power of fiction to produce a "transgender gaze" (in Judith Halberstam's reading) and a girl's perspective (embodied by Lana) that is distinctly queer (in Patricia White's reading), the film's final scenes use fantasy in ways that seem more problematic.[8]

Moreover, *Boys Don't Cry* also leaves out key details, most significantly the death of Phillip DeVine, the African American man who, along with Teena and his friend Lisa Lambert, was also killed in the execution-style shootings.[9] The film ends with the image of Lana draped over Teena's dead body when in fact she was nowhere near the scene of the crime. The racialization of the murders is glossed over in favor of the love story. By structuring the narrative in this way, *Boys Don't Cry* implies that some deaths are more important than others, and it misses an opportunity to tell a more complicated story about the violence that occurred—one that would shift from the fantasy of the romantic couple back to the broader social context within which they moved.

Yet even if the documentary film, *The Brandon Teena Story*, is more faithful to the facts, it is no less structured by forms of fantasy. In the absence of Teena himself, the film produces a trauma archive, a series of documents and testimonies that circulate around that absence. The results can be as emotionally compelling as the fictional reconstructions of *Boys Don't Cry*; photographs of the handsome Teena are used strategically, and the direct testimony of Nissen and Lotter, who are so casual and unapologetic, is disturbing. Also fascinating are the interviews with a range of girlfriends, including Lana, whose explanations of why they found Teena so attractive are a stunning testimony to the queering of heterosexual culture. One of the film's most chilling moments is Teena's direct presence in the police audiotape in which he is forced to answer questions from the viciously hostile sheriff about how he was raped and how he understood his gender. His poignant act of resistance in

refusing to answer questions about his identity is punctuated by his almost inaudible statement, "I have a gender identity crisis." This direct encounter with Teena's voice extracted under such hostile circumstances is at once a haunting brush with the real and a reminder of how much we don't know about what Teena actually thought or did. Unable to bring Teena to life in the way that *Boys Don't Cry* can, *The Brandon Teena Story* instead offers a survey of the people around him, whose poverty and lack of opportunity is made painfully evident, thereby serving as an explanatory framework for the murders. In fact, the focus on how Brandon's death is embedded in working-class and rural cultures faces the challenge of how to raise the question of class without falling into classism.[10]

Even as *Boys Don't Cry* gave the Teena story national visibility, its success sometimes seemed to come at the price of domesticating the more specifically queer issues raised by the story and even the film itself. Swank, for example, talked about *Boys Don't Cry* as a love story with universal appeal, not a specifically queer, lesbian, or transgender one. The media coverage of her performance marveled that a straight actress could play Teena and be so believably masculine, turning the film into an acting tour de force rather than an effort to call attention to the actual Teena or pressing social issues. I'm ambivalent about the crossover success of the film because it suggests that when trauma arrives in the national public sphere, it leaves its queer dimensions behind. When the lesbian, queer, or transgendered becomes simply the human, something important is lost.

Another way in which Teena's death becomes a trauma of the national public sphere, though, is by becoming an index of our own traumatized and traumatizing culture, and of the all-too-high everyday price of pursuing nonnormative expressions of gender and sexuality. I've mentioned the limitations of some of the representations of the Teena case in order to underscore my own attempt to keep attention focused on a range of cases that don't necessarily include trauma in any simple way and that proceed from the everyday rather than from sensational moments of murderous hatred. Yet included in the Teena archive are a range of such everyday moments—moments that are as emotionally compelling as the brutal scene of death: Teena playing the game of bumper skiing on the back of a pickup truck in *Boys Don't Cry*, where the fear that he will be discovered as a passing man is linked to the dangers enforced by conventions of masculinity; the dull voices of the relatives of Teena and Lisa Lambert in *The Brandon Teena Story* as they convey a sense of a limited life for everyone around Teena not because there is something wrong with them but because scarcity and poverty produce fear and hatred that spill over into how gender and sexuality are lived; the combination of toughness and tenderness from the girls who loved Teena because he treated them well; and the voice of Teena having to testify to the sheriff, a moment when the victim is put on trial rather than being able to talk to someone who would be sympathetic. One senses that something is wrong here, and that what's wrong is a matter of national trauma, not because these are isolated or extraordinary events but because these are the kinds of things that happen all the time. If Brandon's story belongs in the national public sphere, it's because of these more pervasive sensations of violence rather than just the sensational event of murder.

Whose Feelings Count?

The national visibility of the Teena story is also of interest to me as a contradiction to my struggle throughout the writing of this book with the sense that lesbian traumas don't really matter within the public sphere. Does someone have to die in order for it to matter? Over and over, I have been guided by the question, "Whose feelings count?" in thinking about whose trauma gets recognized in the national public sphere. I have sought to foreground lesbian experiences in the vicinity of trauma without making claims that these cases are central or paradigmatic either for the nation or lesbian culture. More often than not, the lesbian example is the special or exceptional case, the minoritizing guard against universalizing models of trauma.[11]

At the same time, though, I have had my ambitions for elevating lesbian public cultures to visibility within the national and transnational public sphere, and hence, for a universalizing model in which there are continuities between lesbian trauma and other trauma cultures. Thus the significance of Teena and *Boys Don't Cry* as a case that cuts both ways. When *Boys Don't Cry* is received as a human story rather than a queer one, I'm not satisfied because its important specificities are evacuated. On the other hand, if the sensational violence of Teena's murder becomes a vehicle for talking about more pervasive systems of homophobia, transphobia, and sexism, as well as classism and racism, then it's a queer story that has resonances for a range of audiences. The public sphere that includes my versions of lesbian trauma cultures is not just rooted in melodramatic or sensational accounts of murder and death, although it does incorporate a sensationalism of the everyday. Given this, the feelings and experiences in my trauma archive do not necessarily demand to be seen as national concerns or trauma. My initial examples of roller coasters and *Little Women* have now been supplemented by a list that includes Jean Carlomusto's footage of the Radical Faeries, Maria Maggenti's memories of Domino's pizza, Mala's cereus flowers, Joan Nestle's experience of the gift of touch, and more. I've been accumulating an archive of feelings—feelings materialized in and around objects and performances, feelings that are often incommensurate with what we customarily consider to be traumatic experiences.

In aiming to make lesbian feelings and the publics they construct visible, I am emphatically not trying to make them equivalent to the public spheres that have been constructed around historical traumas such as the Holocaust or slavery. My argument is not based on a model of inclusion in which lesbian cultures get equal time alongside other groups. Rather, my examples are designed to explore some of the widespread effects of trauma across communities and historically across time and generations. The incommensurability of a trauma survivor's experiences and the experiences of someone whose relation to trauma has been more oblique is a necessary aspect of life in the vicinity of trauma. I seek to avoid the problem of hierarchies of suffering by working, as it were, horizontally rather than vertically, extending a wide embrace beyond the immediate site of suffering to look at the experiences of those who are feeling its effects even if they are removed from it (whether historically or spatially). In looking at emotional responses that are tangential to trauma yet that still touch on it, I am arguing not that they are the equivalent of trauma but that they help illuminate its emotional dynamics. The nuances of everyday emotional life contain the residues that are left by traumatic histories, and they too belong in the archive of trauma.

My argument has implications for the concern that the term *trauma* is in danger of losing its meaning by being too widely applied. For instance, Ruth Leys opens her valuable investigation of the genealogy of trauma by situating her argument against what she sees as a disturbing popularization of trauma discourse. Comparing the case of young Ugandan girls abducted by a guerrilla group with

Paula Jones's claim that she was traumatized by President Clinton's sexual harassment, she says:

> *Between them these examples illustrate the spectrum of issues raised by the concept of psychic trauma in our time. On the one hand, there is the absolute indispensability of the concept for understanding the psychic harms associated with certain central experiences of the twentieth century, crucially the Holocaust but also including other appalling outrages of the kind experienced by the kidnapped children of Uganda. On the other hand, it is hard not to feel that the concept of trauma has become debased currency when it is applied to truly horrible events and to something as dubious as the long-term harm to Paula Jones.*[12]

I don't think it's an accident that gender and sexuality figure prominently in Leys's examples and that it's in a case of sexual trauma that the distinction between what counts as trauma and what doesn't is blurred. A national distinction between violent conflict in Uganda and the incursion of sexuality into U.S. presidential politics also underpins the distinction between "real" trauma and trauma lite; trauma lives in the upheavals of Third World nations rather than in the more domestic precincts of the United States.[13] While the two examples are indeed quite different, I don't think the obviousness of the difference should be taken for granted; the force of Leys's argument depends on a dismissal of Paula Jones's experience that doesn't engage with the complexities of sexual harassment as a feminist issue, as well as a corresponding feminist outrage, tinged with liberal benevolence, about what happens to young girls in Third World countries. In contrast to Leys, I would maintain that one of the challenges that trauma studies must be willing to address is the elasticity of the category of trauma as it expands outward into the social—an elasticity that is especially evident in the domain of sexual trauma (and one sign of which is the vexed and contradictory status of feminist positions on sexual harassment). Therefore, useful as Leys's exploration of the contradictions of trauma discourse might be (especially the recurrent confusion between what she calls mimetic and nonmimetic theories), greater clarity on this issue will not necessarily lead to a narrower or more consistent definition of trauma. Unlike Leys, who wants to read a largely psychoanalytic canon of trauma theory in order to produce this greater clarity, I would like to advocate for the value of concepts of trauma that emerge from a wide range of social contexts. The resulting domain of investigation need not consist of feelings that are making a presumptuous claim to count as trauma but instead comprises an emotional field around trauma that requires as much attention as that which narrowly fits the definition.

This question "Whose feelings count?" has come up in a range of public contexts in which I've presented my work while finishing this book. Especially important have been my encounters with New York University's International Trauma Studies Program. Founded by Jack Saul, a psychiatrist with a background in work with political refugees, the yearlong program offers a certificate in trauma studies to psychologists and social workers. In attending some of the seminars, I was surprised to discover a skepticism about traditional psychiatric approaches to trauma as well as an openness to cultural approaches that challenged my own overly rigid distinctions between culture and therapy. Saul and his colleague Steven Reisner, a psychiatrist who is also trained as an actor, have turned to theater as part of their work with refugee communities in New York and survivors of war in Kosovo. Both Saul and Reisner are motivated by their Jewish family histories (Saul's family fled Eastern European pogroms, and Reisner is the child of a Holocaust survivor), but they are more interested in working on contemporary political conflicts than in focusing solely on past histories.[14] The theater project emerges from their sense of the limitations of therapy for communities that have survived war and torture, and whose members often do not consider themselves in need of medical or psychiatric attention and are thus not likely to seek out institutional or social services. Produced through collaboration between survivors of political violence and actors, the performances developed by Theater Arts against Political Violence provide a venue within which survivors can articulate their experiences as a creative resource rather than a pathology.[15] A theatrical event also creates a public sphere within which audience members, many of whom, like the participants, are more likely to go to the theater than to therapy, can address collective traumas. Saul and Reisner have found that participants in the theater projects are enthusiastic about having their experiences legitimated and dignified as part of a cultural and historical archive rather than treated as signs of illness.

The Trauma Studies Program gave me the chance to make direct contact with many people, such as Bessel van der Kolk and Dori Laub, whose work I knew only in print. In person, these doctors seemed far more flexible and self-critical than their written texts suggest. Van der Kolk, whose interest in tracking PTSD through brain scans makes him appear to be a hard-core biological determinist, is actually quite eclectic in his approach to trauma, with a vivid understanding of its social contexts.[16] His conviction that "the body keeps the score" of trauma has led him not only to brain scans and neurobiology but to somatic approaches to trauma customarily associated with the rather unscientific domains of alternative and new age forms of therapy.[17] Laub was extremely humble about the limits of Holocaust testimony in documenting affect (in response to a question I've long had about what happens if the witness tries not to cry), and far from being protective of Holocaust survivors as a special group, he was open to considering the wide range of effects of trauma on those who are not strictly speaking survivors. The best of the presenters acknowledged the experimental nature of trauma studies and embraced its potentially critical relation to traditional psychiatry.

Through these connections, I attended the 2000 International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) conference, which offered a fascinating glimpse into another discipline. One memorable moment was a keynote address on the conference theme of trauma and public health, in which Elizabeth Jane Costello outlined the factors that contribute to PTSD among children based on research that "by the age of 16 one person in three has already been exposed to an 'extreme stressor,' as defined by DSM–IV." Not only did she argue that "treated as a purely clinical problem, this greatly exceeds the capacity of the treatment system," but she suggested that since one of the most fundamental "stressors" is poverty, PTSD is a social problem requiring widespread systemic change

beyond the reach of any public health program.[18] Such moments in which pushing disciplinary protocols to their logical conclusion causes their undoing, and in which the discipline of psychiatry crosses over into social and political analysis, were prevalent at the conference, suggesting that the boundaries between disciplines can and must be challenged. The conference, for example, addressed the issue of journalism and representations of trauma in the media, with particular attention to how the media runs the risk of retraumatizing people through invasive coverage. A panel on hate crimes further confirmed my sense that this issue is one of the most immediate ways of bringing gay and lesbian concerns to trauma studies; yet my own paper on incest and lesbian public sex cultures, while on the outer fringes in its call for cultural rather than clinical approaches to trauma, was still very much connected to the conference's concerns, and especially to a number of panels on the current status of the recovered memory debate. Even as it seemed hospitable to cultural studies, the conference also offered a sobering reminder that the discipline of psychiatry wields tremendous power in responding to public trauma since its experts are the ones consulted when public health programs are created in response to international crises. The stakes of trauma discourse are practical and concrete given that the ISTSS is working with the United Nations to create guidelines for trauma intervention in a global context, and global health funding is being used to treat the survivors of natural disasters, wars, and genocide for PTSD. There are those who are well aware of the need to avoid medicalizing survivors and to create alternatives to programs based on a model of trauma intervention. (An example is programs that use the resilience of families and existing social institutions as a basis for responding to trauma.) But there is still work to be done in order to transform medical approaches into more cultural ones.

The challenge of making lesbian cultures and sexuality relevant to trauma studies has been matched, somewhat more unexpectedly, by the challenge of articulating the relevance of trauma in lesbian and feminist contexts. One particularly telling instance occurred at a conference on the Future of Feminist Critique where my presentation elicited the concern that trauma was a self-defeating category for feminism, displacing the focus on victory and resistance that should be its goal.[19] The reservations expressed at the conference were reminiscent of some of the comments by AIDS activists (discussed in chapter 6) about activism as antithetical to trauma. At the conference, I argued that rather than capitulating to critics who blame feminism for turning women into victims, feminists should be willing to develop creative strategies for linking trauma and politics. The fear of encountering trauma can be debilitating, lending itself to the assumption that political movements cannot incorporate affect or conflict, or that the negotiation of affective life within public cultures is not important work. The most compelling support for my argument came from scholars working in African American studies for whom encounters with both historical and contemporary traumas are inevitable; out of such encounters have emerged strategies for building culture and community from the memory of trauma. One goal of this book is to suggest models for acknowledging trauma that are politically powerful without being based in claims of victimization.

I'm finishing this book in the shadow of the events of September 11 and their ongoing aftermath, which have given unexpected relevance to my project. With astounding rapidity, September 11 has assumed the status of national trauma, and there are already multiple memorial projects underway. Rather than interrupting or changing what I've been saying here, however, the recent events have only confirmed the necessity of my arguments. I would like to see a trauma culture emerge around September 11 that doesn't seek healing and solace by summoning feelings of patriotism in order to produce national unity. I'd like to see that trauma culture constructed as transnational rather than national so that it doesn't construct an us/them dichotomy between American citizens and the rest of

the world. I've been interested in queer approaches to affect that can value the many feelings that people have experienced, including feelings of confusion and ambivalence that don't fit into neat models of anger and grief. I'm also once again wary about whose experiences count in the national trauma culture, which has tended to focus on the figures of the heroic firefighters and the families who have lost people rather than on how the events reverberate across many different lives. It's not that I would necessarily look for the lesbians in this picture, but I would approach the project of memorial with an eye to the textures of September 11 in everyday lives as we continue to live with its memory.

Sensational Archives

Before I finish, I want to return to the opening chapter's remarks about the sensational life of capitalism in order to underscore that this book is an archive of feelings and not just a more specific archive of trauma. It looks at trauma in order to contribute to the broader project of exploring affective life as an index of public cultures and social systems. My debt to Marxist cultural theory announces itself in my use of trauma as a starting point for an inquiry into the linkages between affective and social experience. This influence makes me less dependent on psychoanalytic paradigms, which are more likely to demand that trauma be defined in precise and narrow terms. Rather than diagnosis or a cure, the goal is the development of rich and varied ways to talk about emotional experience as social experience. Trauma is a window onto the study of how historical experience is embedded in sensational experience and how affective experience can form the basis for culture.

There are many personal experiences underlying my choice of topics: taking care of a friend who died of AIDS; my love of yelling in the streets at demonstrations; tracking the lost history of Serbian and Croatian immigration as a clue to my father's manic depression; an incest story that always seems so overdetermined by other things it's impossible to tell it straight; a conviction that butch-femme sexuality is a subcultural secret that needs to be told; a sentimental attachment to arbitrary objects. There are contact points within this more personal archive between everyday emotional life and traumatic histories.

Trauma and its related affects can be elusive objects of inquiry—hence the wide range of cultural genres that have shown up in this book in order to track ephemeral experiences and cultures. My experiment with oral history raised as many questions as it solved, at once offering access to personal testimony while hinting at feelings and experiences that remained unshared in the interview's unpredictable combination of intimacy and publicity. I thus remain convinced of the value of cultural forms for the study of trauma and affect. Experimental documentary, for example, can put the archive of testimony to work in a way that underscores its emotional resonances. A crucial genre for this book has been performance, both as theatrical presentation and as embedded in daily life. Not only does performance act as a repository for ephemeral moments, it can also make an emotion public without narrative or storytelling; the performance might just be a scream, a noise, or a gesture without a sound. It also displaces the dyadic and hierarchical relationship between doctor and patient that governs clinical approaches to trauma, opening that relationship out into the public sphere and expanding the repertoire for the expression of emotion. When culture takes over from the clinic, though, it continues to perform therapeutic functions, but these functions are embedded within collective and public practices.

The archive of feelings therefore holds many kinds of documents, both ephemeral and material. It has its own forms of unabashed sentimentality, and it can thus include the experience of watching the films *Stella Dallas* and *Little Women* that Carlomusto and Lisa Kron describe. But it also documents those moments when it is not possible to feel anything and when something other than a familiar or clichéd scene is necessary to conjure sentiment. As such, it includes the visceral sensation of girls smashing their bodies into one another under the influence of Tribe 8's music or Zoe Leonard's photos of the trees that push their way through fences on the streets of New York's Lower East Side. Sometimes the archive contains tears and anger, and sometimes it includes the dull silence of numbness. Its feelings can belong to one nation or many, and they are both intimate and public. They can make one feel totally alone, but in being made public, they are revealed to be part of a shared

experience of the social. Walter Benjamin loved Paris's nineteenth-century arcades because he considered them to be a repository of the history of capitalism. So, for the same reason, do I love the archive of feelings that can be found, sometimes unexpectedly, in the places, objects, and gestures of lesbian public cultures.

Zoe Leonard, "Tree and Fence, out of my back window," 1998. Gelatin silver print, 18 1/2 by 13 1/8 inches. Edition of six. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York City.

Appendix: A Note on Interviews

The comments from AIDS activists in chapters 5 and 6 are drawn from oral history interviews with the women listed below. Interviews were recorded on audiotape and usually lasted from one to three hours. Unless otherwise indicated, the interviews were conducted in New York City, usually in the homes of the narrators. I used a life history approach but focused primarily on the narrators' activist experiences. The interviews were loosely organized around questions about the narrators' participation in ACT UP, their particular experience as women and lesbians in ACT UP, their friendships and relationships in the group, and the ongoing impact of ACT UP in their lives. The structure of the interviews remained, however, as open as possible in order to give the narrators an opportunity to shape the content.

In some cases, especially toward the end of the research process or when I was interviewing someone for a second time, my questions were more pointed and my own agenda guided the structure of the interview often because I was asking the narrators to clarify comments made earlier. I also consulted extensively with the narrators during the writing process and had them approve each quotation. This dialogue has been enormously important for my thinking. This group of women is extremely self-conscious about representation and highly motivated to make a contribution to the historical record, and their participation was thus very active. I would encourage others using oral history methodology to consult with their narrators as much as possible.

The quotations in the book have, in some cases, been edited for coherence or by the wishes of the narrators. I have tried to abridge the quotations as little as possible in order to represent better the integrity of the comments, but space has sometimes demanded excision. I wish to thank all of these women for their exceptional contributions to this project. I plan ultimately to deposit as many of the interview tapes as possible at the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, New York.

Marina Alvarez, Bronx, New York, 27 June 2000
Amy Bauer, 19 January 2000
Marion Banzhaf, 10 April 2000
Jean Carlomusto, 28 May 1997 and 31 January 2000
Kim Christensen, Purchase, New York (by phone), 27 January 2000
Anne D'Adesky, 2 November 1999
Alexis Danzig, San Francisco, California, 23 July 1997
Heidi Dorow, 15 June 2000
Catherine (Saalfield) Gund, 3 November 1997
Amber Hollibaugh, 23 October 1999, 24 January 2000, and 24 April 2000

Alisa Lebow, 1 June 1998 Zoe Leonard, 20 January 2000 and 25 July 2001
Maria Maggenti, 19 June 2000
Tracy Morgan, 23 June 2000
Ann Northrop, 28 May 1998
Jane Rosett, 20 January 2000
Cynthia Schneider, 21 December 1999
Sarah Schulman, 7 April 1997
Polly Thistlethwaite, Fort Collins, Colorado (by phone), 12 April 2000
Maxine Wolfe, Brooklyn, New York, 30 May 1997

Notes

Introduction

1 Kathleen Hanna, conversation with the author, 10 April 2000.

2 See Amber Hollibaugh, *My Dangerous Desires*: *A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).

3 Dorothy Allison, *Two or Three Three Things I Know For Sure* (New York: Plume, 1995), 45.

4 David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 121–22.

5 Formative influences on my thinking about the problem of the archive include Jacques Derrida,*Archive Fever*: *A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), which is discussed more extensively in chapter 6; Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), especially the section in the introductory chapter titled " 'I Hate Your Archive': On Methodology and National Culture," and " '68 or Something," *Critical Inquiry* 21, no. 1 (autumn 1994): 124–56; and José Esteban Muñoz, "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts," *Women and Performance* 16 (1996): 5–16.

6 See Jill Dolan, "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative,' " *Theatre Journal* 53, no. 3 (October 2001): 455–79.

7 See Raymond Williams on the two meanings of culture in "Culture Is Ordinary," in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, and Socialism* (London: Verso, 1989), 3–18. My thinking about publics and counterpublics has also been influenced by Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), and some of the scholarship that has emerged in response to it: Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); and Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

8 See Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (winter 1998): 561–62.

9 I am therefore revising my own work in *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

10 Douglas Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy," *October* 51 (winter 1989): 3–18.

1. The Everyday Life of Queer Trauma

1 Kathleen Stewart suggests that we may be living in a "trauma time" where history and social structure manifest themselves in the felt experience of both catastrophic trauma and the banal affective moments of everyday life. See "The Private Life of Public Culture: Scenes from the U.S.," manuscript.

2 See Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

3 Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 6.

4 Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*.

5 Lisa Duggan, "The Incredible Shrinking Public," manuscript.

6 Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, 4.

7 See Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy."

8 Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995). For another related genealogical approach to trauma, see Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Whereas Young focuses on the institutional histories that lead to the clinical PTSD diagnosis and pays particular attention to clinical work with Vietnam War veterans, Leys emphasizes psychoanalytic theory, including the work of Freud, Pierre Janet, Sándor Ferenczi, and William Sargent. Especially interesting is her critique of the recent work of Bessel van der Kolk, as well as the cultural studies approach of Cathy Caruth. For a further discussion of Leys, see my epilogue.

9 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3d ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1980), 236, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, rev. 3d ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1987), 247, and *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 424. The debates over the DSM-III definition will be discussed later in the chapter.

10 Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories*: *The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crew, and Leo Spitzer, eds., *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England, 1999).

11 See Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4; and Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

12 My understanding of *2.5 Minute Ride* has benefited enormously from two events at which Kron discussed her work: a panel on humor and the Holocaust sponsored by the New York Public Theater, 5 April 1999; and a presentation for my trauma cultures class and José Muñoz's solo performance class in New York University's Department of Performance Studies, 23 April 1999. I thank Lisa Kron also for her generosity in providing me with a script of her performance. For a critical discussion of the trauma culture generated by the Holocaust, especially in the United States, see Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

13 The topic of humor and the Holocaust was the subject of a New York Public Theater forum organized in conjunction with *2.5 Minute Ride's* run on 5 April 1999. Frequent references to the film *Life Is Beautiful*, as well as other popular representations of the Holocaust, such as

Schindler's List, made for a challenging opportunity to articulate the distinctiveness of *2.5 Minute Ride*.

14 For examples of this work, see Holly Hughes and David Román, O Solo Homo: *The New Queer Performance* (New York: Grove Press, 1998). For a useful critical framework, see José Estaban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

15 See Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1980–1981; reprint, New York: Pantheon, 1997).

16 See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), and her edited collection, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), and History and Memory after Auschwitz (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); Geoffrey Hartman, *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994); and James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993).

17 One significant locus of debate about the relation between poststructuralist theory and the Holocaust has been Paul de Man's wartime journalism. See Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz, and Thomas Keenan, eds., *Wartime Journalism*, 1939–1943 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), and *Responses: On Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

18 See *Shoah*, dir. Claude Lanzmann (1985), the transcript of which has been published in English as Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), and as *Shoah: The Complete Text of the Acclaimed Holocaust Film*(New York: Da Capo Press, 1995). See also Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991).

19 See Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

20 See Lanzmann's own discussions of *Shoah* in "Seminar on *Shoah*," *Yale French Studies* 79 (1991): 82–99, and "The Obscenity of Understanding: An Evening with Claude Lanzmann," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory, ed. Cathy Caruth* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 200–20.

21 I'm borrowing Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's formulation in *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 82–86, including her argument that it is not possible to adjudicate between minoritizing and universalizing approaches; they each have their strategic merits.

22 See Hirsch, *Family Frames*.

23 On the interesting history of the PTSD diagnosis, see A. Young, *The Harmony of Illusions*. On the mutual intersection of feminism and the discourse of sexual abuse, see Louise Armstrong, *Rocking the Cradle of Sexual Politics: What Happened When Women Said Incest* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1994).

24 Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 28.

25 See Judith Lewis Herman, *Father-Daughter Incest* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

26 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 35–50.

27 There have been efforts on the part of pharmaceutical companies to show that antidepressants, such as Zoloft, can be used to cure PTSD—proof of which would lead to greatly increased sales in what is already a hugely profitable industry.
28 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 32.
29 Cathy N. Davidson, introduction to "No More Separate Spheres!" Special issue of *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (September 1998): 443–63.
30 See Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (winter 1998): 547–66.
31 Laura S. Brown, "Not outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 100–12. For more on gender bias in the identification of trauma, see Nina Felshin, "Women and Children First: Terrorism on the Home Front," in *Violent Persuasions: The Politics and Imagery of Terrorism*, ed. David Brown and Robert Merrill (Seattle: Bay Press, 1993), 257–70, which also includes the text of a symposium in which Margaret Randall argues for the links between political terrorism and child abuse (206–18).
32 In the DSM–IV, the stipulation that trauma must be "outside the range of usual human experience" has been replaced by the more flexible account of trauma as the experience of an event "that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury or other threat to one's physical integrity" (424) and including witnessing or learning about such events experienced by others. If the person's response involves "intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (424), the response can be diagnosed as traumatic, in contrast with the DSM–IIIRs narrower stipulation that the event "would be markedly distressful to almost anyone" (247). See also A. Young, *The Harmony of Illusions*, 287–90. In "Not outside the Range," Laura Brown discusses ongoing problems with the language of DSM–IV.
33 For a survey of the current state of thinking on this issue, see the collection of essays in "No More Separate Spheres!" *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (1998), 443– 63, including the useful introduction by Davidson. See also Lora Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).
34 For this argument, see Armstrong, *Rocking the Cradle of Sexual Politics*.
35 See, for example, Jennifer Freyd, *Betrayal Trauma: The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). Freyd's own recovered memories and subsequent conflict with her parents led them to found the False Memory Syndrome Foundation. For more on that organization, see the Web site, www.fmsfonline.org. For a father's angry response to the recovered memory movement, see Mark Pendergrast, *Victims of Memory: Incest Accusations and Shattered Lives* (Hinesburg, Vt.:Upper Access Books, 1995). For cultural histories, see also Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); and Debbie Nathan and Michael Snedeker, *Satan's Silence: Ritual Abuse and the Making of a Modern American Witch Hunt* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).
36 See Janice Haaken, *The Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory, and the Politics of Looking Back* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998). This book is remarkable for its dialectical approach to the bitter conflict between the recovered memory and false memory camps.
37 See Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 203. My thanks to Robin Maltz for pointing out this passage to me.
38 Allison, *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, 71.
39 Ibid., 71–72.
40 See Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham,

N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993); and Cathy N. Davidson and Michael Moon, eds., *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race, and Gender from Oroonoko to Anita Hill* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).

41 See Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Sturken, *Tangled Memories*. Tal makes links between the Vietnam War and sexual abuse, and argues for the displacement of the Holocaust as the privileged site of trauma discourse. Sturken uses the Vietnam War and the AIDS crisis as two cases for exploring strategies of cultural memory.

42 See Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*: *On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996).

43 See Sturken, *Tangled Memories*. The concept is also developed in Bal, Crew, and Spitzer, *Acts of Memory*.

44 The bibliography here is vast, but a brief list would include Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction*, 1790–1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography*, 1760–1865 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17 (summer 1987): 65–81; Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Dwight McBride, *Impossible Witnesses: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

45 See Toni Morrison, Beloved (New York: Knopf, 1987), as well as "The Site of Memory," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 299–306, and "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 28, no. 1 (1989): 1–34; Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* (Boston: Beacon, 1988); and Patricia Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). See also Sharon Patricia Holland, *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).

46 See Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

47 See José Esteban Muñoz, "No es facil: Notes on the Negotiation of Cubanidad and Exilic Memory," *Drama Review* 39, no. 3 (fall 1995): 76–82.

48 The Special Period refers to the period of economic upheaval in Cuba in the 1990s following the breakup of the Soviet Union. The text of *Milk of Amnesia* is available in the *Drama Review* 39, no. 3 (fall 1995): 94–111; and Alina Troyano, *I, Carmelita Tropicana: Performing between Cultures*, ed. Chon Noriega (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

49 See Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Shocken, 1968), 155–200. The critical literature on Benjamin is vast; books that have informed my thinking here include Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1989); the special issue "The Actuality of Walter Benjamin," *New Formations* 20 (summer 1993); Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993);

and Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). Not to be forgotten, of course, is Karl Marx's *Capital*, whose role in the discourse of sensation is discussed in my *Mixed Feelings*.

50 See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*: *The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

51 See, for example, Fredric Jameson's critique of Benjamin's refusal of theoretical generalization in "The Theoretical Hesitation: Benjamin's Sociological Predecessor," *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 2 (winter 1999): 267–88.

52 See my *Mixed Feelings*.

53 Although this tendency can be found throughout their work, see especially Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), and *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991).

54 Gordon, Ghostly *Matters*, 24.

55 Kathleen Stewart, "Beyond the Pale: The Eruption of Monstrosity in the American 'Country'," manuscript. See also her *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

56 Stewart, "The Private Life of Public Culture," manuscript. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick makes a similar argument in the introduction to *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

57 See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), and *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).

58 See Michael Warner, ed., *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), and *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999). See Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 197–222, and *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

59 Biddy Martin, *Femininity Played Straight*: *The Significance of Being Lesbian* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 2, 14.

60 See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel," GLQ* 1, no. 1 (1993): 1–16, and with Adam Frank, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995). In response to Sedgwick's critique in *Shame and Its Sisters* of my *Mixed Feelings*'s representation of affect as too monolithic and homogeneous, I would maintain that a general category of affect is useful for creating a broad umbrella under which a variety of projects can flourish, including those that focus in more qualitative ways on specific affects—a project that Sedgwick calls for.

61 See Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993); Berlant on "diva citizenship" in The Queen of America Goes to Washington City; and Michael Moon, *A Small Boy and Others: Imitation and Initiation in American Culture from Henry James to Andy Warhol* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), especially the chapter on Jack Smith, "Flaming Closets," 67–93.

62 See Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media* (Minneapolis:

University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy"; Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Martin, *Femininity Played Straight*.

63 See José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, and "Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho's *The Sweetest Hangover (and Other STDs),*" *Theatre Journal* 52 (2000), 67–79; David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 10, no. 4 (2000): 677–700, and David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds., Loss (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

64 Muñoz also uses Williams to make this point in "Ephemera as Evidence."

65 Examples of this project include Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*; and the special issue of Critical Inquiry 24, no. 2 (winter 1998) on "Intimacy," which includes the essay by Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public."

2. Trauma and Touch

1 See Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 54, 50.
2 See Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*.
3 See Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," 163.
4 See Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); "Is the Rectum a Grave?"; and *Homos*.
5 See Joan Nestle, ed., *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader* (Boston: Alyson Press, 1992); Madeline D. Davis and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Recent publications on contemporary butch-femme cultures include Sally Munt, ed., *Butch/Femme: Inside Lesbian Gender* (London: Cassell, 1998), in which part of this chapter first appeared; Lily Burana, Linnea Due, and Roxxie, eds., *Dagger: On Butch Women* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Cleis Press, 1994); Laura Harris and Elizabeth Crocker, eds., *Femme: Feminists, Lesbians, and Bad Girls* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Judith Halberstam, Female Masculinity (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998). See also Amber Hollibaugh, *My Dangerous Desires: A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); and Esther Newton, *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay: Personal Essays, Public Ideas* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000). In the 1990s, butch-femme occupied an important position as a new (or revived) version of lesbianism's "magical sign," displacing the paradigmatic image of the lesbian feminist and joined more recently by the figure of the transgendered person. For discussions of how images of the representative lesbian are constructed, see Katie King, "The Situation of Lesbianism as Feminism's Magical Sign: Contests for Meaning and the U.S. Women's Movement, 1968–1972," *Communication* 9 (1986): 65–91; and Arlene Stein, *Sex and Sensibility: Stories of a Lesbian Generation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
6 Important examples of queer theory that invoke butch-femme include Sue-Ellen Case, "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," *Discourse* 11, no. 1 (fall 1988/winter 1989): 55–73; Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 13–31, and Gender Trouble; Martin, *Femininity Played Straight*, esp. "Sexual Practice and Changing Lesbian Identities," "Extraordinary Homosexuals and the Fear of Being Ordinary," and "Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias"; and Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.
7 Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* makes a similar argument about the need for an expanded understanding of gender, which can be facilitated by recognizing multiple and diverse kinds of female masculinities.
8 This chapter draws on two articles that explore these topics more extensively and independently of questions of trauma: Ann Cvetkovich, "Recasting Receptivity: Femme Sexualities," in *Lesbian Erotics*, ed. Karla Jay (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 125–46, and "Untouchability and Vulnerability: Stone Butchness as Emotional Style," in *Butch/Femme: Inside Lesbian Gender*, ed. Sally Munt (London: Cassell, 1998), 159–69.
9 Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961), 18. All subsequent references are to this edition, and page numbers will be included in the text.
10 Sigmund Freud, "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (1895), in vol. 1 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth

Press, 1966), 283–397.

11 The three core features of PTSD response are intrusion and hyperarousal, numbing, and repetition. See, for example, Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

12 For excellent discussions of the death drive that have informed my thinking, see Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Samuel Weber, *The Legend of Freud* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); and Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), esp. "Freud and the Sandman."

13 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 130–31 n. 1.

14 John Wilson, lecture, International Trauma Studies Program, New York University, 4 November 1999.

15 Bessel van der Kolk, "The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress," *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* 1 (1994). For a critique of van der Kolk's biologism, see Leys, *Trauma*, esp. 229–65. Leys's work is discussed in more detail in my epilogue.

16 Madeline Davis, "Roles? I Don't Know Anyone Who's 'Playing': A Letter to My Femme Sisters," in *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, ed. Joan Nestle (Boston: Alyson Press, 1992), 268.

17 Amber Hollibaugh, "The Femme Tapes," in *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, 263.

18 Lyndall MacCowan, "Re-collecting History, Renaming Lives: Femme Stigma and the Feminist Seventies and Eighties," in *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, 320.

19 Mykel Johnson, "Butchy Femme," in *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, 396. Writing about coming out in the 1980s, she adapts the categories of 1940s and 1950s butch-femme and appreciates this history as it contributes to her own erotic self-definition. (And Johnson sees butch-femme first and foremost as an erotic, "more than a gender or political understanding" [ibid].) She claims butch-femme without feeling the need to choose one role over the other or choose between making love to or being made love to. Her self-identification as a femme is described as the end point of a process of at first aspiring to be butch and desiring butch lovers. That she both identifies with and desires the butch position suggests that butch and femme need not be opposed. As her title indicates, femme power can have its butch elements.

20 Ibid., 396.

21 Amber Hollibaugh and Cherríe Moraga, "What We're Rollin' around in Bed With: Sexual Silences in Feminism," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, eds. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (Boston: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 398. This essay is also reprinted in Nestle, *The Persistent Desire*, 243–53.

22 Hollibaugh and Moraga, "What We're Rollin' around in Bed With," 398.

23 For an excellent discussion of such distinctions, including the roles of top and bottom, see Esther Newton and Shirley Walton, "The Misunderstanding: Toward A More Precise Sexual Vocabulary," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole Vance (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 242–50.

24 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on the poetics of fisting and erotics of the anus as orifice is one such example. In addition to attending to how the specificity of the anus as the orifice being entered and the hand or fist as the penetrating object challenges assumptions about penetration and sexuality, her work also makes important theoretical claims about the variability of sexual acts across gender and sexual identity. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Is the Rectum Straight? Identification and Identity in *The Wings of the Dove*," in Tendencies (Durham, N.C.: Duke

University Press, 1993), 73–103, and "Queer Performativity." The attention that Sedgwick devotes to the erotics of fisting is also warranted by the erotics of digital penetration. For instance, such an investigation could shed new light on debates about the lesbian dildo, which have tended to consider it a substitute for the penis or phallus, not the fingers.

25 For a discussion of ancient Greek sexuality, see David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1990). For a discussion of Chicano and Latino male homosexual practices, see Tomás Almaguer, "Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior," *differences* 3, no. 2 (summer 1991): 75–100; and Ana Maria Alonso and Maria Teresa Koreck, "Silences: 'Hispanics,' AIDS, and Sexual Practices," *differences* 1, no. 1 (winter 1989): 101–24.

26 Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" 195, 215.

27 Bersani is not entirely clear about the distinction between self-shattering as psychic versus physical experience. His emphasis on the psychic rather than the physical raises a variety of unanswered questions about the cultural construction of self-shattering, which even as a psychic category should not be universalized. Bersani's argument would seem to depend on a variable or contingent relation between the psychic and physical since it would be a problematic universalization to assume that any particular physical act necessarily produces psychic experiences of self-shattering. For example, even "minor" forms of touching or penetration can potentially be highly threatening. And it is in relation to particular cultural constructions of gender and sexuality that the anus and penetration of it become so highly charged that anal penetration produces self-shattering. Thus, a concept such as self-shattering raises an array of questions about the construction of the relations among body, psyche, and culture.

28 Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" 117.

29 Like many of the critics of dominant-submissive sexuality that he would otherwise disagree with, Bersani seems to accept the premise that sex that is about power, or that is nonegalitarian, is about pain, not pleasure. He posits the experience of a self-shattering masochism as central to a sexuality based on pain rather than pleasure. (For a fuller account of his reading of Freudian notions of the death drive and masochism, see Bersani, *The Freudian Body*.) His argument about the value of self-shattering (or getting fucked) rests on the assumption that a coherent self is necessary and desirable, and dependent on avoiding the violation of penetration. His contention could easily take a different direction here, using claims about the value of selfhood and its dependence on bodily self-sufficiency to maintain that these are by no means universal values. Instead, Bersani reverses the erotic affect attached to a hierarchy that remains established by models of heterosexuality and masculinity that are grounded in constructions of penetrating and being penetrated. Gay male sexuality and anal penetration thus derive their meanings from heterosexuality and straight masculinity; in Bersani's view, getting fucked is always for gay men a process of emasculation or feminization that is humiliating even when it is pleasurable. Even if this were generally true within the present cultural construction of gay male sexuality, it would by no means be a universal fact about male homosexuality or anal penetration. (I am grateful to David Halperin for clarifying and confirming these issues for me in an extremely helpful conversation.)

30 The potentially misogynist underpinnings of Bersani's assumption that getting fucked results in an undesirable feminization are related to other aspects of his argument that have been critiqued by feminists, who have noted the misogyny of his remarks about camp and effeminate gay male behavior. See Carole-Anne Tyler, "Boys Will Be Girls: The Politics of Gay Drag," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 38–40; and Teresa

de Lauretis, "Film and the Visible," in *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video*, ed. Bad Object-Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 246–47.

31 An example of this kind of analysis is Lillian Faderman's discussion of butchfemme bar culture in which she attributes its violent aspects to alcoholism. Bars emerge as a breeding ground of addiction and dysfunctionality in her account, which lends itself to a moralizing and judgmental assessment of butch-femme. See *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life inTwentieth-Century America* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1991), 159–87.

32 Current usage of the term *queer* might be understood as sustaining and articulating this apparent contradiction. For instance, Sedgwick's discussion in "Queer Performativity" of the centrality of shame to queer sexual and cultural practices represents an effort to preserve their negativity and to see shame as a potentially "positive" political and cultural resource.

33 Joan Nestle, "The Gift of Taking," in *A Restricted Country* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1987), 129–30. Other citations will be included in the text as "Gift."

34 See David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 25. In "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary" (*Bodies That Matter* [New York: Routledge, 1993], 57–92), Judith Butler addresses this issue as it emerges in psychoanalytic theory, emphasizing how the concept of the phallus speaks to the contingent or historically specific processes by which parts of the body are zoned as meaningful in order to create, for example, concepts of sexuality or power. Butler notes the way in which what might be thought of as a body that precedes social construction is in fact constituted by those constructions. See also her "Bodies That Matter," in *Bodies That Matter*, 27–56.

35 See Davis and Kennedy, *Boots of Leather*, *Slippers of Gold*, 191–230.

36 See Judith Halberstam, "Lesbian Masculinity or Even Stone Butches Get the Blues," *Women and Performance* 8, no. 2 (1996), 61–73, an expanded version of which appears in her *Female Masculinity*. Halberstam's analysis has been extremely useful to my own, particularly in the productive discrepancy between her assumption that butchness constitutes a form of female masculinity and my assumption that butches exhibit behavior that might easily be coded as feminine.

37 See Joan Nestle, "The Femme Question," in *The Persistent Desire*, 141.

38 See Bonni Barringer, "When Butches Cry," in *The Persistent Desire*, 109.

39 Johnson, "Butchy Femme," 396.

40 Sally Munt's "The Butch Body" (in *Heroic Desire: Lesbian Identity and Cultural Space* [London: Cassell, 1997]) questions the valorization of vulnerability as a sign of intimacy. The demand for vulnerability gives rise to the negative assessment of butch untouchability and stimulates the questionable desire to "break" butch impermeability.

41 Johnson, "Butchy Femme," 396.

42 Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, 125.

43 In *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), Teresa de Lauretis develops an account of butch untouchability through the language of psychoanalysis, arguing that fetishism is more appropriate than castration to describe the productive possibilities of loss and absence that structure (butch) lesbian sexuality. In a reading of Moraga's *Giving up the Ghost*, de Lauretis discusses how the butch lesbian Corky seeks impermeability and untouchability as a means of acknowledging and disavowing castration, thereby turning her untouchable body into a fetish.

44 Hollibaugh and Moraga, "What We're Rollin' around in Bed With," 245.

45 Ibid., 249.

46 In "Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias," in *Femininity Played Straight*, Biddy Martin discusses Moraga's construction of femininity in terms of vulnerability and confinement to the body, and she argues that queer valorizations of butch cross-gender identification as escape from the female body lead to the invisibility of femme lesbianism. Especially important is her look at the implications of this construction of femininity and the body for readings of Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.

47 Judith Butler describes this as the "morphological imaginary," in *Bodies That Matter*, 57–92. Her analysis, though, focuses primarily on the materialization of the phallus in the penis. Moraga's work suggests the range and scope of a specifically butch morphological imaginary, which foregrounds the symbolic significance of the body's surfaces or boundaries. Furthermore, her images emphasize the materiality of the discursive, which interests Butler but is ultimately given less attention than the discursivity of the material. The influence of Catholicism on Moraga's interest in the materializations of the immaterial (or spiritual) is not to be underestimated. For more on the lesbian erotics of surfaces, see Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), and *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

48 Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, 120–21.

49 Ibid., 142. For more on Moraga's discursive production of the body, see Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, "De-constructing the Lesbian Body: Cherríe Moraga's *Loving in the War Years*," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 595– 603.

50 For discussions of *Stone Butch Blues* that read Jess as transgendered, see Jay Prosser, "No Place like Home: The Transgendered Narrative of Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 41, nos. 3–4 (fall–winter 1995): 483– 514; and CatMoses, "Queering Class: Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*," *Studies in the Novel* 31, no. 1 (1999): 74–97. The reception of *Stone Butch Blues* has shifted in the context of a developing female-to-male transsexual public culture that it has helped to foster, but when it was first published it was read as a butch, rather than transgendered, narrative. I would argue that rather than definitively choosing one reading over the other, it is valuable to understand *Stone Butch Blues* as available to many audiences and identifications. This issue is a register of wider debates about butch versus transgender identities, however, and is thus likely to remain contested. On this debate, see Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 141–74.

51 I say this out of a sense (admittedly impressionistic) that *Stone Butch Blues* has been more powerful for many readers than *The Persistent Desire* and *Boots of Leather*. I'm interested in how this reception elides the distinction between butch and transgender identities and substitutes a single exceptional narrative for a range of narratives.

52 Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1993), 5. Other references will be cited in the text.

53 In *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), Michael Warner describes how citizenship and the public sphere were centrally tied to the history of publication, understood as a means of addressing through writing an anonymous but collective public, and by so doing, constituting the writer as a public person.

54 See, though, Anna Livia's wonderful essay (" 'I Ought To Throw a Brick at You': Fictional Representations of Butch/Femme Speech," in *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially*

Constructed Self, ed. Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall [New York: Routledge, 1995], 245–77) on what she calls the "butch grunt style," which consists of saying very little and being emotionally inexpressive. She suggests that this style is not reflected by the empirical evidence that men generally talk more than women, and argues that the butch idiom of white, working-class masculinity is a fictional model borrowed from sources such as Hollywood and hard-boiled detective fiction.

55 My thinking here is influenced by Toni Morrison's essay "Unspeakable Things Unspoken," and her novel *Beloved*.

56 See Seltzer, *Serial Killers*, 1.

3. Sexual Trauma/Queer Memory

1 Program for Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, 1994, 32.

2 My account of Tribe 8's performance and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is based on firsthand experience and is unabashedly and strategically opinionated. For other accounts of the 1994 festival, including Tribe 8's appearance, see Evelyn McDonnell, "Queer Punk Meets Womyn's Music: Tribe 8's Performance at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival," Ms., November–December 1994, 78– 82; and Gretchen Phillips, "I Moshed at Mich," *Village Voice*, 6 September 1994, 41–43.

3 I don't presume to know what an offensive or flashback-producing moment would be. In fact, many who issued warnings about Tribe 8's performance had no idea what it involved. My sense of the controversial moments actually comes from the band itself. In conversations before the show, Lynn Breedlove, the lead singer, worried about both the whipping and dildo scenes being misunderstood.

4 Tribe 8's presence at Michigan also foregrounded an emerging debate about generational differences among lesbians, with a taste for loud music and punk rock indicating a broader set of political and cultural generational divides. One of Tribe 8's most successful appearances was at a workshop hosted by the "Over 40s" tent, where women representing both generational camps discovered considerable common ground. At another workshop, Tribe 8 expressed justifiable amazement at the tendency of some of their critics to treat S/M and punk music as indistinguishable. But a punk rock band ends up associated with S/M precisely because these sexual and cultural styles are seen as markers for other kinds of differences. For a discussion of how debates about S/M serve as a vehicle for negotiating differences among lesbians, an argument that applies more generally to other sources of controversy, see Julia Creet, "Daughter of the Movement: The Psychodynamics of Lesbian S/M Fantasy," *differences* 3, no. 2 (summer 1991): 135– 59.

5 "Mom Gone Song," San Francisco: Outpunk, Out 13, 1994.

6 "All I Can Do," on record *Fist City*, Alternative Tentacles, Virus 156, 1995.

7 For more on the value of fantasies of aggression, see Judith Halberstam, "Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representation, Rage, and Resistance," *Social Text* 37 (1993): 187–201. Breedlove's castration ritual demonstrates the potential for performance to make fantasy more powerful by making it material.

8 For more on the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and the negotiation of conflict, see Ann Cvetkovich and Selena Wahng, "Don't Stop the Music: Roundtable Discussion with Workers from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival," GLQ 7, no. 1 (2001): 131–51.

9 As with the distinction between punk and S/M, I would not want to equate a stage performance that includes whipping or leather with S/M sexual practices since there are so many bad uses to which sweeping definitions of S/M are put. The vocabulary for aggression, violence, and power is so limited that "S/M" ends up doing far too much work. Yet, I also think some service can be done to the project of understanding S/M better by noting the continuities between the practices of those who self-identify within S/M communities and a variety of other performative and sexual practices.

10 Donna Minkowitz, "My Father, My Self: Coping with Abuse by Loving the Top Within," *Village Voice*, 6 April 1993, 18.

11 Linnea Due, "Dyke Daddies," *On Our Backs* (January–February 1993): 20–22, 40–42.

12 On the persistence of danger within sexuality, see Hollibaugh, *My Dangerous Desires*.

13 Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity," 13.

14 A word about vocabulary is in order. I alternate between *incest* and *sexual abuse* because neither

term is entirely satisfactory. While sexual abuse productively and necessarily opens up the category of sexual violence to include a wide variety of acts and relations, I want to unsettle it from comfortably resolving or exhaustively defining the category it presumes to demarcate. Moreover, in its generality, as well as in its ties to legal and therapeutic discourses, it can sound euphemistic. Thus, I sometimes prefer the shock value of the word incest, with its power to invoke, and hence break, taboos, as a way of unsettling the term sexual abuse (just as sexual abuse has been used to alter the meaning of incest). Whatever its limitations or inaccuracies, incest also has the advantage of naming a relation of power, not an act, thereby referring to an important dimension of what constitutes sexual violence and serving as a reminder that "abuse" cannot necessarily be defined in terms of specific sexual acts. These vocabulary problems bear some relation to debates about the word *queer*, which I also use strategically and to designate an unresolved tension rather than a solution. In particular, *lesbian* and queer exist in a dense relation to one another in my text since I don't want queer to erase lesbian in the act of displacing it.

15 See Ellen Bass and Laura Davis,*The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*, 2d ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1992); and Louise M. Wisechild, ed., *She Who Was Lost Is Remembered: Healing from Incest through Creativity* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1991)

16 The use of the term *survivor* to reverse the damage implied (and according to some, inflicted by) the term *victim* is a phenomenon that resembles the varied practices of naming within *gay* and *lesbian*, and/or queer communities. It seems particularly similar to the use of gay and lesbian as positive and self-identified terms designed to displace homophobic and clinical names and labels. The displacement of *gay* and *lesbian* by *queer* indicates that "positive" language need not be necessary for pride, or everywhere and always strategic. Might there, by the same token, be limits to the value of the term *survivor*? Also at stake in the term *survivor* is its use in relation to the Holocaust. The dignity granted by the category of survivor in relation to sexual abuse and incest turns, in part, on the term's association with physical survival of the Holocaust. The problem of linking different forms of violence and trauma is a question I take up below.

17 Liz Galst, "Overcoming Silence: Lesbians Lead the Recovery Movement for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse," *Advocate*, 3 December 1991, 62–63.

18 Cited in ibid.

19 Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 268–69.

20 I borrow this terminology from Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, esp. 82–90. The distinction does not presume an evaluation; Sedgwick makes the important point that it is not possible to predict in advance whether a minoritizing or universalizing strategy will be the most appropriate to achieve a particular goal, such as combating homophobia.

21 Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 321.

22 Although this may well be a matter of who's reading it. Karen Houppert's review of *Victims of Memory: Incest Accusation and Shattered Lives*, in which Mark Pendergrast responds to his daughters' accusations of sexual abuse, notes that Pendergrast is particularly upset by the lesbian influence on sexual abuse discourse and specifically blames *The Courage to Heal* for encouraging its readers to become lesbians. See Karen Houppert, review of *Victims of Memory: Incest Accusation and Shattered Memory*, by Mark Pendergrast, *Village Voice*, 4 April 1995, 70.

23 The relevant sources here are vast, but on the intersections of women's popular culture and therapeutic culture in particular, see, for example, Lauren Berlant, "The Female Complaint," Social Text 19–20 (1988): 237–59, and "Poor Eliza," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (September 1998): 635–68; Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Mimi White, *Tele-Advising: Therapeutic Discourse in American Television* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*.

24 See Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray, "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?" *Signs* 18 (1993): 260–90.

25 See Vikki Bell, *Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault, and the Law* (London: Routledge, 1993).

26 See Janice Haaken, "Sexual Abuse, Recovered Memory, and Therapeutic Practice: A Feminist-Psychoanalytic Perspective," *Social Text* 40 (1994): 115–46, and *Pillar of Salt*.

27 See Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*; and L. Brown, "Not outside the Range."

28 Discussions of genres such as slave narrative and testimony have raised the problem of audiences who cannot be adequate witnesses to that which is told, although there may be something for them to hear. Considering Morrison's *Beloved* and its relation to the genre of slave narrative, both Avery Gordon and Doris Sommer offer compelling accounts of how stories may refuse to address some listeners, and the cases they consider have influenced my sense of the genre of incest stories. See Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*; and Doris Sommer, "Resisting the Heat: Menchú, Morrison, and Incompetent Readers," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993). See also Felman and Laub, *Testimony*.

29 I don't presume these examples to be representative; indeed, they work to disrupt the simple generic classification of literature related to sexual abuse or trauma. And the list of other possibilities is long. Deserving particular mention as an example of alternative therapy is the work of Louise Wisechild, author of two books about her own experiences as a survivor of sexual and emotional abuse, *The Obsidian Mirror: An Adult Healing from Incest* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1988), and *The Mother I Carry: A Memoir of Healing from Emotional Abuse* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1993), and editor of *She Who Was Lost Is Remembered*, a collection of women's creative work and discussions of how creativity has helped them to heal from incest. Like *The Courage to Heal*, Wisechild's work is openly lesbian but does not foreground lesbianism in relation either to incest or to healing from it.

30 Margaret Randall, *This Is about Incest* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1987). Citations refer to this edition and will be included in the text.

31 Margaret Randall, *Coming Home: Peace without Complacency* (Albuquerque, N. Mex.: West End Press, 1990).

32 See Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 158–82.

33 Caruth, introduction to *Trauma*, 6.

34 Dorothy Allison, "Believing in Literature," in *Skin: Talking about Sex, Class, and Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1994), 166.

35 Dorothy Allison, "The Exile's Return: How a Lesbian Novelist Found Her Way into the Mainstream," *New York Times Book Review*, 26 June 1994, 15.

36 The tensions between the literary and lesbian were further articulated in a letter to the editor in response to Allison's *New York Times* piece. The writer, Edward Falco, was surprised to learn that Allison is a lesbian since it was not evident to him from her novel, and he expressed the hope that *Bastard*'s universal appeal and literary power would not be compromised by an awareness of it as the work of a lesbian (see *New York Times Book Review*, 24 July 1994, 27).

37 Cited in Amber Hollibaugh, "Telling a Mean Story: Amber Hollibaugh Interviews Dorothy Allison," *Women's Review of Books* (July 1992): 16.

38 Dorothy Allison, "A Question of Class," in *Skin: Talking about Sex, Class, and Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1994), 34.

39 Dorothy Allison, *Bastard out of Carolina* (New York: Plume, 1992). Subsequent citations refer to this edition and will be included in the text.

40 This episode is resonant with the dynamics of shame analyzed by Sedgwick in "Queer Performativity," and "A Poem is Being Written," *Tendencies*, 177–214.

41 See, for example, the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* article about Allison as well as her own writing about her queer domestic household, "Mama and Mom and Dad and Son," *Harper's Bazaar*, March 1998, 114, 118, 120. There is also a burgeoning industry of Allison criticism in academia, and *Bastard out of Carolina* has become a popular teaching text. See, for instance, Lynda Hart, *Between the Body and the Flesh: Performing Sadomasochism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), esp. 167–203; Gillian Harkins, "Telling Fact fromFiction: Dorothy Allison's Disciplinary Stories," in *Incest and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Elizabeth Barnes (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), 283–315; Katie Henninger's chapter on *Two or Three Things* and southern literature and photography in "Ordering the Facade: Photography, Representation, and the South" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1999); and Alyssa Harad's chapter on Allison in her work on U.S. trauma histories, "Ordinary Witnesses" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 2003).

42 In "A Modest Proposal," Sarah Schulman discusses the problems lesbian writers face in seeking to reach a wider audience and suggests that "if you want to be accepted as an American writer you must remove or obscure the lesbianism of your work. Otherwise, you are condemned to the Gay List." See Schulman's *My American History* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 274.

43 Allison, *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, 43. Subsequent citations refer to this edition and will be included in the text.

44 Allison's voice is captured in the short film *Two or Three Things but Nothing for Sure*, dir. Tina DiFeliciantonio and Jane C. Wagner (Women Make Movies, 1997), in which lyrical footage and family photos accompany readings from the memoir. The film is available from Women Make Movies, 462 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10013.

45 For more on Allison's relation to photography, see Henninger, "Ordering the Facade," which includes a discussion of how Allison responds to representations of the South in Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*, and James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

46 Michelle Tea, *The Passionate Mistakes and Intricate Corruption of One Girl in America* (New York: Semiotext(e)/Smart Ass Press, 1998), 153–54, 155. The live performance of Tea's work is an important part of its impact. She and Sini Anderson founded Sister Spit, a weekly night of spoken word performance, as part of San Francisco's club scene. Inspired by punk bands, Sister Spit has also done three national road tours, Sister Spit's Ramblin' Road Show. See their cd release, *Ramblin' Road Show: Greatest Hits*, available from Mr. Lady Records.

47 See StaciHaines, *The Survivor's Guide to Sex:How to Have an Empowered Sex Life after Child Sexual Abuse* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1999). Citations refer to this edition and will be included in the text.

48 Also functioning this way now in New York is Toys in Babeland, which started in Seattle and opened its Manhattan branch in 1998. The store frequently sponsors events designed to promote sexual pleasure and politics and has rapidly drawn the attention of not just lesbian but mainstream

media and consumers. The women's bookstore of the 1970s has become the sex toy store of the 1990s.

49 See Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

50 See Dorothy Allison, Trash (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1988).

4. Transnational Trauma and Queer Diasporic Publics

1 See Achy Obejas, *We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress like This*? (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Cleis Press, 1994), 123–24, 113.

2 The following short list of scholarship on race and psychoanalysis is exemplary rather than exhaustive: Hortense Spillers, " 'All the Things You Could Be by Now if Sigmund Freud's Wife was your Mother': Psychoanalysis and Race," *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 4 (1996): 710–34; Christopher Lane, ed., *The Psychoanalysis of Race* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian American Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).

3 Crucial references in this rapidly growing field include Mike Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization, and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1990); Anthony King, ed., *Culture, Globalization, and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Binghamton: State University of New York Art Department, 1991); Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds., *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (Minneapolis: University ofMinnesota Press, 1994); Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Ann Cvetkovich and Douglas Kellner, eds., *Articulating the Global and the Local: Globalization and Cultural Studies* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997); Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds., *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997); M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds., *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, eds., *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998); Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); Norma Alarcón, Caren Kaplan, and Minoo Moallem, eds., *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

4 See Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler, eds., *Queer Diasporas* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); George Chauncey and Beth Povinelli, eds., "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally," *GLQ* 5, no. 4 (1999); David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), esp. 204–28; Gayatri Gopinath, "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion," *Positions* 5, no. 2 (fall 1997): 467–89; and Martin F. Manalansan IV, "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma," *GLQ* 2, no. 4 (1995): 425–38.

5 For an important discussion of the losses of assimilation and the refusal of this loss in the experience of melancholy, see Eng and Han, "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia."

6 See Sedgwick, "Queer and Now," in *Tendencies*, 9.

7 Ibid., 8. Indeed, the tension between global and local forms of analysis reproduces itself within gay and lesbian studies. See, for example, the difference between Martin Manalansan ("In the Shadows of Stonewall"), who argues for local differences in sexual identities, practices, and communities in the United States and the Philippines, and Dennis Altman (*Global Sex* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001]), who describes the globalization of a historically specific U.S. model of gay

identity and public culture.

8 Lowe and Lloyd, *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, xx.

9 Patricia Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, 13.

10 Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 156.

11 As confirmation of this point as well as the importance of affective and psychic responses to immigration more generally, it has been enormously gratifying to read Eng and Han, "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia"; and the introduction to Eng and Kazanjian, *Loss*, in which the Eng and Han article is reprinted.

12 For more on innovative approaches to Puerto Rican nationalism, including the perspectives of those living in the United States, see Ramón Grosfoguel and Frances Negrón-Muntaner, eds., *Puerto Rican Jam: Rethinking Colonialism and Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). See also Lisa Sánchez-González, *Boricua Literature: A Literary History of the Puerto Rican Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

13 For example, there have recently been cases of gays and lesbians applying for U.S. citizenship on the basis of political asylum. Moreover, gays and lesbians without legal status often live in a state of de facto exile from their countries of origin because they cannot apply for spousal privileges and cannot return home for fear of not being able to reenter the country.

14 This scene and others are discussed by Negrón-Muntaner in her own essay about the video, "When I Was a Puerto Rican Lesbian: Meditations on *Brincando el charco*: *Portrait of a Puerto Rican," GLQ* 5, no. 4 (1999): 511–26, which includes an extensive bibliography. Other significant writings on the video include Lawrence LaFountain-Stokes, "1898 and the History of a Queer Puerto Rican Century: Imperialism, Diaspora, and Social Transformation," *Centro (de Estudios Puertorriqueños)* 11, no. 1 (fall 1999): 91–110; and José Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire: Interventions from Queer Latino America* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

15 Martin Manalansan, paper presented at the American Studies Association conference, Washington, D.C., October 1997.

16 See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 271–313, and "In a Word: Interview," with Ellen Rooney, *differences* 1, no. 2 (summer 1989): 124–56.

17 On exilic memory and Tropicana's *Milk of Amnesia*, see Muñoz, "No es facil."

18 Organizations include SALGA (South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association) (New York), Shakti (London), Trikone (San Francisco), and *Khush* (Toronto). Events include the annual Desh Pardesh festival in Toronto. Publications include *Trikone* (California) and *Bombay Dost* (Bombay).

19 Both Jürgen Habermas and Benedict Anderson explore the link between print culture and the public sphere. See Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*; and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

20 For an important discussion of the strategic uses and limits of the term South Asian, see Anannya Bhattacharjee, "The Public/PrivateMirage: Mapping Homes and Undomesticating Violence Work in the South Asian Immigrant Community," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997), 308–29, and "The Habit of Ex-Nomination: Nation, Woman, and the Indian Immigrant Bourgeoisie," *Public Culture* 5, no. 1 (fall 1992): 19–44.

21 I am especially indebted to scholars working more extensively on South Asian queer publics. See

Gayatri Gopinath, "*Funny Boy*s and Girls: Notes on a Queer South Asian Planet," in *Asian-American Sexualities: Dimensions of the Gay and Lesbian Experience*, ed. Russell Leong (New York: Routledge, 1996), 119–27, and "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora"; Jasbir Puar, "Transnational Sexualities: South Asian (Trans)nation(alism)s and *Queer Diasporas*," *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, ed. David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1998), 405–24; and Nayan Shah, "Sexuality, Identity, and the Uses of History," *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, ed. David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1998), 141–56.

22 As Martin Manalansan points out in his "In the Shadows of Stonewall," queer immigrants may not participate in public events such as Gay Pride parades or protests because this form of visibility might jeopardize their ins status, or because such events seem overwhelmingly white or American. It is important to remain alert to how the social formations of diasporic queers may not always be public and not to presume publicity as the sign of political success.

23 Pratibha Parmar's videos are available from Women Make Movies, 462 Broadway, Suite 500, New York, N.Y. 10013.

24 For a critique, see Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "*Warrior Marks*: Global Womanism's Neo-Colonial Discourse in a Multicultural Context," *Camera Obscura* 39 (September 1996), 5–33.

25 See Amarpal K. Dhaliwal, "Reading Diaspora: Self-Representational Practices and the Politics of Reception," *Socialist Review* 24, no. 4 (1994): 13–43.

26 Puar, "Transnational Sexualities," 418. Puar usesMootoo as an example of someone whose location challenges models of South Asian queer diaspora.

27 As an example of the challenges of such work, see Anannya Bhattacharjee's discussion in "The Habit of Ex-Nomination" of the feminist group Sakhi's organizing in New York City around domestic violence in South Asian communities.

28 This reappropriation of Hindi musicals and popular film was illuminated in "Desi Dykes and Divas," a clip show presented by Gayatri Gopinath and Javid Syed at the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Film Festival and the New York New Festival in 1997. The clip show has been an important genre at gay and lesbian film festivals for creating an archive out of materials that may not be seen as gay or require an argument to make their relevance visible. On the role of gay and lesbian film festivals in creating a public culture, see essays by Patricia White, B Ruby Rich, Eric O. Clarke, and Richard Fung in "Queer Publicity: A Dossier on Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals," *GLQ* 5, no. 1 (1999): 73–93.

29 See, for example, Rakesh Ratti, ed., A *Lotus of Another Color: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience* (Boston: Alyson Press, 1993); Women of South Asian Descent Collective, ed., *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1993); Sunaina Maira and Rajini Srikanth, eds., *Contours of the Heart* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva, eds., *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1996); Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth, eds., *A Part, Yet A part: South Asians in Asian America* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1998); and Ruth Vanita, ed., *Queering India: Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2002). Anthologies devoted to Asian American culture more generally but including significant material on South Asian culture include Russell Leong, ed., *Asian-American Sexualities: Dimensions of the Gay and Lesbian Experience* (New York: Routledge, 1996); and David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom, eds., *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1998).

30 *Fire*, dir. Deepa Mehta (1996), part of a trilogy that includes an adaptation of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India*, titled *Earth* (1999); and Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (New York: William Morrow, 1994).

31 For more on *Funny Boy*, see Gopinath, "Nostalgia, Desire,Diaspora." For more on *Fire*, see Gayatri Gopinath, "Local Sites, Global Contexts: The Transnational Trajectories of Deepa Mehta's *Fire*," in Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and Martin F. Manalansan IV, eds., *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (New York: New York University Press, 2002); Geeta Patel, "On Fire: Sexuality and Its Incitements," in Ruth Vanita, ed., *Queering India*, 222–33; and Monica Bachmann, "After the *Fire*," in Ruth Vanita, ed., *Queering India*, 234–44.

32 Shani Mootoo,*Cereus Blooms at Night* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1996), 13. Subsequent page references refer to this edition and will be included in the text.

33 For a discussion of this intergenerational dynamic in which traumatic loss is played out in the register of melancholia, see Eng and Han, "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia."

34 See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

35 On the photograph in relation to traumatic memory, see Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, esp. 19–43; and Cadava, *Words of Light*.

36 Gayatri Gopinath, "Cartographies of Violence in Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*," paper presented at American Studies Association conference, Seattle, November 1998.

37 See Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven* (New York: Dutton, 1987).

38 Cited in Kuan-Hsing Chen, "The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual: An Interview with Stuart Hall," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 488.

5. AIDS Activism and Public Feelings

1 See Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*.

2 Berlant, "Poor Eliza," 657.

3 For another investigation of how ACT UP combines emotion and politics, see Deborah Gould, "Sex, Death, and the Politics of Anger: Emotion and Reason in ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2000). I thank Gould for sharing her work with me.

4 For a discussion of cultural activism, see Douglas Crimp, ed. *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997). The DIVA-TV (Damned Interfering Video Activists) collective made *Target City Hall* (1989), *Pride* (1989), and *Like a Prayer* (1991). The compilation *Video against AIDS* (Video Data Bank, 1989), available from Video Data Bank at 112 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60603, includes many important videos from this period, including *Testing the Limits*: NYC (Part One), (1987) and segments of Gay Men's Health *Crisis's Living with AIDS* series, which was coproduced by Gregg Bordowitz and Jean Carlomusto. For a graphics archive and an account of major ACT UP demonstrations between 1987–1990, see Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, *AIDS Demo Graphics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990). (Indicative, though, of the danger of losing access to ACT UP's history is the fact that this book is out of print.) A key guide to AIDS activist video is Alexandra Juhasz, *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), which includes an annotated videography by Catherine Saalfield. Many of these videos are included in the Royal S. Marks Collection in the New York Public Library, which was assembled with support from the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS.

5 See ACT UP/NY Women and AIDS Book Group, *Women, AIDS, and Activism*(Boston: South End Press, 1990); and *Doctors, Liars, and Women*, dir. Jean Carlomusto and Maria Maggenti, on *Video against AIDS* (Video Data Bank, 1989). For a discussion of these works and other AIDS activist videos, seeAnn Cvetkovich, "AIDS and Video Activism," in *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage*, ed. Grant Kester (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 182–98. On women and AIDS activism, as well as *Doctors, Liars, and Women*, see Paula A. Treichler, "Beyond *Cosmo:* AIDS, Identity, and Inscriptions of Gender," *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 235–77.

6 See, for example, Peter F. Cohen, *Love and Anger: Essays on AIDS, Activism, and Politics* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998).

7 Jean Carlomusto, interview with the author, 31 January 2000. See appendix for more information on this and other interviews.

8 I have been helped in this enterprise by an ongoing body of scholarship on AIDS and AIDS activism. Sources that have been especially important for my work include John Nguyet Erni, *Unstable Frontiers: Technomedicine and the Cultural Politics of "Curing" AIDS* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Cindy Patton, *Fatal Advice: How Safe-Sex Education Went Wrong* (Durham, N.C.: DukeUniversity Press, 1994); Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS,Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); David Román, *Acts of Intervention: Performance, Gay Culture, and AIDS* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic*; and Cathy J. Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

9 See Sarah Schulman, *People in Trouble* (New York: Dutton, 1990), and *Rat Bohemia* (New York:

Dutton, 1995); *DiAna's Hair Ego: AIDS Info Up Front*, dir. Ellen Spiro (Women Make Movies, 1989); *(In)Visible Women*, dir. Marina Alvarez and Ellen Spiro (Women Make Movies, 1991); *Greetings from out Here*, dir. Ellen Spiro (Video Data Bank, 1993); *Roam Sweet Home*, dir. Ellen Spiro (1996); and Zoe Leonard, *Strange Fruit* (New York: Paula Cooper Gallery, 1995), and *Secession: Zoe Leonard* (Vienna: Wiener Secession, 1997). Other examples include Catherine (Saalfield) Gund's video work, including the *Positive: Life with HIV* (1995) television series and *Hallelujah! The Ron Athey Story* (1998); and Jean Carlomusto's videos *To Catch a Glimpse* (1997) and *Shatzi Is Dying* (2000). For a fuller look at Carlomusto's videos, see chapter 7.

10 ACT UP/NY's files are now cataloged and available in the manuscript collections of the New York Public Library.

11 See Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*.

12 See Caruth, *Trauma*; and Sturken, *Tangled Memories*.

13 Cathy Caruth and Thomas Keenan, "The AIDS Crisis Is Not Over: A Conversation with Gregg Bordowitz, Douglas Crimp, and Laura Pinsky," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 256–71.

14 Douglas Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy," *October* 51 (Winter 1989), 3–18.

15 See Watney, *Policing Desire*, 7–8; and Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*, 121–22.

16 See L. Brown, "Not outside the Range," 100–112.

17 This was some of the language used to describe the symptoms of PTSD in the 1980 DSM–III, but it was subsequently removed from the 1994 DSM–IV in part because of this problem. For an overview of the history of the diagnosis, see Young, *The Harmony of Illusions*.

18 See Eng and Kazanjian, introduction to *Loss*, 1–25.

19 See Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*, esp. 14–15, and "Conclusion: Acting-Out and Working-Through," 205–23.

20 For Douglas Crimp's own reflections on the current state of militancy, mourning, and the AIDS crisis, see "Melancholy and Moralism," in *Loss*, ed. David Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 188–202.

21 See Joan Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 397–415.

22 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

23 See Esther Newton, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Gay and Lesbian Town* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993); and Davis and Kennedy, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*. My work has also been informed by experimental ethnography and the influence of cultural theory on anthropology, including the following works: James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetic and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon, eds., *Women Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); and Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*. Especially important has been work on the role of sexuality and gay and lesbian identities in anthropological field-work such as William L.

Leap and Ellen Lewin, eds., *Out in the Field: Reflections of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Don Kulick and Margaret Wilson, eds., *Taboo: Sex, Identity, and Erotic Subjectivity in Anthropological Fieldwork* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and Newton, *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay*. Much of my knowledge of oral history was provided firsthand by Ron Grele and Mary Marshall Clark, the director and associate director of Columbia University's Oral History Research Office, during my time as a Rockefeller Fellow there in 1999–2000. Important textual resources include Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ron Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, 2d ed. (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1985); Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991); and Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, eds., *Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998). Finally, my experiment in ethnography would be unimaginable without the advice and inspiration of my aunt, Celia Haig-Brown, author of *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988), and *Taking Control: Power and Contradiction in First Nations Adult Education* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995).

24 See, for example, Jean Carlomusto, *To Catch a Glimpse* (1997) and *Shatzi Is Dying* (2000); Gregg Bordowitz, *Fast Trip, Long Drop* (1993); Marlon Riggs, Tongues Untied (1989) and *Black Is, Black Ain"t* (1995); Ellen Spiro, *Greetings From Out Here* (1993).

25 My sense of the ephemerality of oral history is informed by work in performance studies that focuses on the difficulty of archiving live events; the oral history interview can usefully be understood on the model of performance. See, for example, Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked* (New York: Routledge, 1993). On the combined ephemerality of queer cultures and performance, see Muñoz, "Ephemera as Evidence."

26 See Felman and Laub, *Testimony*; and Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*.

27 Naming identity presents a bit of a challenge here since many of the women I talked to had relationships with men before, during, and after their ACT UP involvement: some might identify as bisexual, others as lesbians who have relationships with men, still others as having changed sexual identity over time. There's also some slippage between lesbians and women in my research; the interviews focus primarily on lesbians not simply because I restricted my inquiry to lesbians but also because so many of the women central to ACT UP were lesbians.

28 The names of those interviewed will be cited parenthetically in the text; see appendix.

29 One inspiration for my use of montage is Alessandro Portelli, *Ordine e Gia Stato Esequito Roma le Fosse Ardeatine la Memoria* (Rome: Donzelli, 1999), which includes many long blocks of quotations from interviews. I had access to the manuscript of the English translation.

30 Marina Alvarez and Ginetta Candelario, "(Re)visiones: A Dialogue through the Eyes of AIDS, Activism, and Empowerment," in *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age*, ed. Ella Shohat (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 250. This interview offers important redefinitions of what constitutes activism. Alvarez's comments come in response to the following remarks by Candelario: "Traditionally, when we think of activism we envision protest marches, sit-ins, and more formal lobbying activities. If we limit ourselves to that definition, we fail to recognize the kind of quiet, often familial activism that takes place in Latina/o communities. Resistance to oppression and oppressive conditions occurs in many forms" (250).

31 For more on the Commission on Human Rights's AIDS Discrimination Unit, which was established

in 1983, see Amber Hollibaugh, Mitchell Karp, and Katy Taylor, "The Second Epidemic," in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp, 127–42.

32 Jane Rosett, phone conversation and e-mail with the author, 8 July 2002.

33 On the issue of betrayal in ethnography, see Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*.

34 See Jorjet Harper, "Lesbians Who Sleep with Men: Only Her Hairdresser Knows for Sure," *Outweek* 33 (11 February 1990): 46–51.

35 See Zoe Leonard, "Safe Sex Is Real Sex," in *Women, AIDS, and Activism*, ed. ACT UP/NY Women and AIDS Book Group (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 27–30.

36 Ann Cvetkovich and Marion Banzhaf, "After the Interview: Activists Talk Back," a presentation at the Oral History Summer Institute, Columbia University, June 2001. Since Banzhaf was enrolled as a student in the program, I asked her to collaborate with me on my presentation; she felt self-conscious about how the other students would respond to her interview because they already knew her, but in a different context.

37 See Maria Maggenti, "Falling for a Guy: A Lesbian Adventure," *Village Voice*, 27 June 1995, 25–27.

38 See Crimp, "Melancholy and Moralism," 200.

39 In retrospect, the 076 trial was enormously helpful in developing treatment specific to women since it has ultimately proven to be the case that AZT and other drugs are useful for reducing perinatal transmission in pregnant women with HIV.

40 Maxine Wolfe, letter to author, 3 September 2001.

41 See Hollibaugh's essays and interviews, recently collected as *My Dangerous Desires*.

42 Ibid., 256.

43 Ibid., 258.

6. Legacies of Trauma, Legacies of Activism

1 Crimp's initial argument is in "Mourning and Militancy." Crimp himself discussed the subsequent implications of his assertion and screened the Carlomusto clip from *Fast Trip, Long Drop* on a panel accompanying the Fever in the Archives series of AIDS activist videos from New York Public Library's Royal S. Marks AIDS Activist Video Collection, which screened at the Guggenheim Museum in December 2000. The panel took place at New York University on 6 December 2000.

2 Jean Carlomusto and Jane Rosett curated the AIDS: A LIVING ARCHIVE™ exhibit in 2001 at the Museum of the City of New York to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of GMHC. The exhibit incorporated parts of this ongoing archive project, including an AIDS time line and the interactive "Portrait Gallery," which combines video portraits of HIV + people, many of them activists, and an altar installation with candles. The "Portrait Gallery" will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

3 See Eng and Kazanjian, introduction to *Loss*.

4 For Gund's own account of her friendship with Navarro, see Catherine (Saalfield) Gund, "Till Death Do Us Part," in *Generation Q*, eds. Robin Bernstein and Seth Clark Silberman (Boston: Alyson, 1996), 108–15.

5 I've had questions about tears and testimony since watching the testimony of Abraham Bomba, the barber in Claude Lanzmann's documentary film Shoah. Bomba's testimony is excruciating to listen to for many reasons, not least of which, for me, is that he is struggling not to cry in order to maintain a composed demeanor. Lanzmann's urgent demand that Bomba continue seems also to require that Bomba overcome the urge to cry. This segment of *Shoah* has drawn a great deal of critical commentary, although no one, to my knowledge, has discussed the question of tears. See Felman and Laub, *Testimony*; and LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*.

6 See Derrida, *Archive Fever*. For more on Derrida and archives, see chapter 7.

7 See Paul Monette, *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988); Wojnarowicz, Close to the Knives; Derek Jarman, *At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1992; and Gary Fisher, *Gary in Your Pocket: Stories and Notebooks of Gary Fisher* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996). On gay male AIDS memoirs, see Jason Tougaw, "Testimony and the Subjects of AIDS Memoirs," in *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community*, ed. Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougaw (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 166–85; and Jonathan Ayres, (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, forthcoming).

8 Sarah Schulman, *People in Trouble* (New York: Dutton, 1990); and *Rat Bohemia* (New York: Dutton, 1995).

9 See, for example, J. D. Lindy and John Wilson, eds., *Countertransference in the Treatment of PTSD* (New York: Guilford, 1994); Charles Figley, ed., *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1995); and Laurie Anne Pearlman and Karen W. Saakvitne, *Trauma and the Therapist: Countertransference and Vicarious Traumatization in Psychotherapy with Incest Survivors* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

10 Grover, *North Enough*, 4. Further quotations will be cited in the text.

11 See Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" See also the commentary on this essay in chapter 2.

12 On the nostalgia that attends the genocide of native peoples, see Romero on *The Last of the Mohicans* in *Home Fronts*; and the essay about gay men and AIDS that she also cites, Jeff

Nunokawa, " 'All the Sad Young Men': AIDS and the Work of Mourning," in *Inside/Out*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 311–22.

13 Hoffman, *Hospital Time*, 77. Further quotations will be cited in the text.

14 For Rebecca Brown's experimental fiction, see, for example, *The Terrible Girls* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1990). Carolyn Allen has written about this novel in *Following Djuna: Women Lovers and the Erotics of Loss* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

15 R. Brown, *The Gifts of the Body*, 48. Further quotations will be cited in the text.

16 Alexis Danzig, e-mail to author, March 1999, following my presentation at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, City University of New York Graduate Center, 17 February 2000.

17 *Outlaw*, dir. Alisa Lebow (Women Make Movies, 1994); *Internal Combustion*, dir. Alisa Lebow and Cynthia Madansky (Video Data Bank, 1995); and *Treyf*, dir. Alisa Lebow (Women Make Movies, 1998).

18 *The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love*, dir. Maria Maggenti (1995).

19 For more on Leonard's work, as well as the relations between activism and art, see Ann Cvetkovich, "Fierce Pussies and Lesbian Avengers: Dyke Activism Meets Celebrity Culture," in *Feminist Consequences: Theory for the New Century*, ed. Elisabeth Bronfen and Misha Kavka (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 283–318.

20 Planned for completion in 2003, this video is being made in collaboration with Shanti Avirgan and Ann Rosetti.

21 Catherine (Saalfield) Gund, phone conversation with author, 24 May 2001.

22 Martin, *Femininity Played Straight*, 2. Among the targets of Martin's critique is Bersani's work, as exemplified by "Is the Rectum a Grave?"

23 Martin quotes the following passage: "Let's suppose that lesbians and gay men in the academies and institutions of the contemporary United States have a particularly potent relation to grief. Exiled from the Law of the Social, many gay men and lesbians may have introjected the passionate hatred of mainstream homophobia and taken up an embattled, aggressive, and complex relation to the death drive" (Peggy Phelan, "Dying Man with a Movie Camera: *Silverlake Life*: *The View from Here*," *GLQ* 2, no. 5 [1995]: 380).

24 Martin, *Femininity Played Straight*, 29.

25 See Caruth, *Trauma, and Unclaimed Experience*.

7. *In the Archive of Lesbian Feelings*

1 Along with pseudofilms such as *Plantation Memories, Watermelon Woman* includes a fake archive of photographs of Richards, which Dunye produced in collaboration with photographer Zoe Leonard. The photographs have been exhibited independently (including at a 1997 Whitney Museum biennial installation) and have been published as a book: Zoe Leonard and Cheryl Dunye, *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* (San Francisco: Artspace Books, 1996).

2 My information about LHA comes from discussions with volunteers during visits there, and I offer thanks to Polly Thistlethwaite, Lucinda Zoe, and Paula Grant for their generous assistance, and especially to Maxine Wolfe and Desiree Yael Vester for giving me time in which to interview them about the archives. Other sources of information include LHA newsletters and Nestle, *A Restricted Country*, esp. 110–19, 178–88.

3 Desiree Yael Vester, interview with author, Hart, Mich., 24 August 1997.

4 According to Vester (ibid.), there are sometimes proposals that the top floor should be used for the collection, but others think the live-in resident gives the archives its identity as a "home."

5 For her thinking about archives and intimacy as well as for conversations about the ideas in this chapter, I am indebted to Lauren Berlant. For discussions of the archive, see Berlant, " '68 or Something," and *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, 10–15. For discussions of intimacy, see Lauren Berlant, ed., "Intimacy," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (special issue) (winter 1998). For their connections, see Lauren Berlant, "Intimacy's Ephemera" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association, Toronto, December 1997).

6 See Morrison, "The Site of Memory."

7 On the paradigm of "one hundred years of homosexuality," see Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, which is influenced by Foucauldian models of sexuality as a category with a history. Adopting a different historical model is historian John Boswell, who argues both polemically and with considerable archival evidence for a continuous tradition of homosexuality in his books: *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), and *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York: Villiard, 1994). It can be useful to understand Boswell's scholarship as driven by the affective need for history. For an interesting discussion of Boswell along these lines, informed by Halperin, Foucault, and others, see Dinshaw's introduction to her book about the intersections of medieval studies and queer studies, *Getting Medieval*. Dinshaw argues for the affective power of different historical periods to "touch" one another through the queer juxtaposition of past and present.

8 In lesbian culture, the resurgence of interest in butch-femme cultures has been part of this phenomenon. The popular interest in gay and lesbian history has been facilitated by the recent publication of many important scholarly books, including George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Davis and Kennedy, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*; Newton, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island*; and Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Dutton, 1993).

9 See my "In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings: Documentary and Popular Culture," *Camera Obscura* 49 (2002): 107–46. Overlapping with this chapter, the article explores documentaries that use a popular culture archive and focuses in particular on *Forbidden Love*, dir. Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman (Women Make Movies, 1992); *Greetings from out Here*, dir. Ellen Spiro, about lesbian and gay life in the South; and *Girlpower*, dir. Sadie Benning (Women Make Movies, 1992). I am

particularly interested in documentaries that use experimental strategies to exhibit a visual archive. For more on the gay and lesbian documentary scene, see Chris Holmlund and Cynthia Fuchs, eds., *Between the Sheets, in the Streets: Queer, Lesbian, Gay Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). My article was initially written to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Women Make Movies (founded in 1972), an organization that also performs archival functions, not only by literally housing films and videos that collectively constitute a history of women's media making but also by providing an institutional umbrella that renders visible this tradition of alternative media. Video Data Bank (founded by Lyn Blumenthal and Kate Horsfield in 1976) also deserves mention alongside Women Make Movies for its key role in the archiving of video history and in distributing and promoting work by women. My thinking about Women Make Movies's history and cultural significance has been indispensably informed by Patricia White, "Feminist Reruns: Women Make Movies at Twenty- Five" (paper presented at the Console-ing Passions: TV, Video, and Feminism conference, Montreal, May 1997).

10 Muñoz discusses the status of ephemera in the production of queer history in "Ephemera as Evidence."

11 *Not Just Passing Through* is distributed by Women Make Movies.

12 Michael Moon, "Unauthorized Writing: AIDS and the Revival of 'Archaic' Modes of Literary and Cultural Production" (paper presented at the sixth North American Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Studies conference, University of Iowa, Iowa City, November 1994).

13 In addition to drawing on time spent at the LHA,my insights are based primarily on research in and about the GLBTHS as well as the James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center at the San Francisco Public Library, and the New York Public Library. My thanks to Jim Van Buskirk of the San Francisco Public Library, Bill Walker and Susan Stryker of the GLBTHS, and Mimi Bowling of the New York Public Library for sharing information about the history of these archives and institutions.

14 Another example is the negotiations between the Mazer Collection and One Collection, both grassroots archives based in Los Angeles, and the University of Southern California (USC) about moving the collections to the campus. The Mazer (a lesbian archive) ultimately decided not to move its collection to usc because the university was only providing space and not staff.

15 See Mimi Bowling, preface to *Becoming Visible: An Illustrated History of Lesbian and Gay Life in Twentieth-Century America*, Molly McGarry and Fred Wasserman (New York: New York Public Library, 1998), ix–x. Bowling notes as significant the acquisition of two special collections in the 1980s prior to the IGIC acquisition: the papers of Howard Brown, a former New York City health commissioner and founder of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and the records of the lesbian/feminist poetry journal *Thirteenth Moon*. She observes that "more important than these two acquisitions per se was the fact that a fundamental shift in policy was under way, and was openly articulated" (ix).

16 Polly Thistlethwaite quotes Mimi Bowling as saying that the exhibit was the most successful in the NYPL's history. See Polly Thistlethwaite, "Building 'A Home of OurOwn': The Construction of the Lesbian Herstory Archives," in *Daring to Find Our Names: The Search for Lesbigay Library History*, ed. James V. Carmichael Jr. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 169.

17 See Molly McGarry and Fred Wasserman, *Becoming Visible: An Illustrated History of Lesbian and Gay Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: New York Public Library, 1998).

18 Cited in Brenda J. Marston, "Archivists, Activists, and Scholars: Creating a Queer History," in *Daring to Find Our Names: The Search for Lesbigay Library History*, ed. James V. Carmichael Jr.

(Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 141.

19 Thistlethwaite, "Building 'A Home of Our Own,' " 169.

20 Douglas Crimp and Alex Juhacz, Fever in the Archive panel discussion, Center for Gender and Sexuality, New York University, 6 December 2000. Other panelists were Jean Carlomusto, Gerard Fergerson, and me.

21 Jim Hubbard, conversation with author, New York City, 9 June 2000.

22 Joan Nestle, "Notes on Radical Archiving from a Lesbian Feminist Standpoint," *Gay Insurgent* 4–5 (spring 1979): 11; cited in Thistlethwaite, "Building 'A Home of Our Own,' " 154. Thistlethwaite's article is a vital source of information about the history of the LHA, and I thank her for drawing it and the excellent collection of which it is a part to my attention.

23 Mimi Bowling, interview with author, New York City, 20 June 2000.

24 A panel organized by Susan Stryker on "Issues Confronting Queer Archives: A Roundtable Report from the Field" at the Future of the Queer Past conference, University of Chicago, 14–17 September 2000, spurred lively debate about these issues, including the National Museum of Gay and Lesbian History project. Another example of particular interest is the Human Sexuality Collection at Cornell University, which is unusual for being supervised by a full-time curator, Brenda Marston, with particular expertise in gay and lesbian studies. See her account of the archive, which was founded with a 1988 donation from another grassroots archive, the Mariposa Education and Research Foundation for the study of sexuality, in Marston, "Archivists, Activists, and Scholars."

25 Polly Thistlethwaite, one of the video's directors, has been centrally involved with the LHA and also works as a professional librarian. Bringing the archives to popular attention, she has appeared as "Polly the Butch Librarian" in a *Dyke TV* feature called "In the Archives." (*Dyke TV* is a weekly cable access show produced inNew York City.)

26 For more on how film festivals create publics, see Patricia White, B Ruby Rich, Eric Clarke, and Richard Fung, "Queer Publicity: A Dossier on Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals," *GLQ* 5, no. 1 (1999): 73–93.

27 Hampton is also one of the oldest lesbians whose story of life in butch-femme cultures appears in Nestle's collection *The Persistent Desire*, which is itself a kind of archive. The widespread popularity of the "collection" (both fiction and nonfiction) as a gay and lesbian print genre owes something to its archival functions.

28 For an expanded version of this argument, see Cvetkovich, "In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings," which discusses the use of pulp fiction in the Canadian documentary about butch-femme, *Forbidden Love*. For an excellent discussion of both *Forbidden Love* and the archive of lesbian pulp fiction, see Amy Villarejo, "Forbidden Love: Pulp as Lesbian History," in *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film*, ed. Ellis Hanson (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 316– 45. Pulps from the Barbara Grier and Donna McBride Pulp Paperback Collection are also featured prominently in the display cases at the James C. Hormel Reading Room in the SFPL. Pulp fiction has also been a rich resource for contemporary lesbian visual culture, including ephemeral genres such as posters and zines. See, for example, Nina Levitt's refunctioned pulp novel covers in "Conspiracy of Silence," in *Stolen Glances: Lesbians Take Photographs*, ed. Tessa Boffin and Jean Fraser (London: Pandora, 1991), 60–66. Levitt's work first appeared in an exhibit curated by Lynn Fernie, codirector of *Forbidden Love*. Another sign of the recognition of the historical significance of the pulps, and especially their covers, is the recent publication of a book devoted to them: Jaye Zimet, *Strange Sisters: The Art of Lesbian Pulp Fiction, 1949–1969* (New York: Viking Studio, 1999).

29 The text of the play is available in Five Lesbian Brothers, *The Five Lesbian Brothers: Four Plays*

(New York: Theater Communications Group, 2000).

30 In essays such as "Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting," Walter Benjamin establishes himself as an important theorist of the archive, interested in the connections between memory, history, and archival objects (see *Illuminations*, 59–67). Benjamin's interest in the photograph can be linked to his interest in modes of historicization that include memory and affect, such as the trauma of shock. For more on this issue, see Cadava, *Words of Light*.

31 See *Testing the Limits: NYC (Part One)*. DIVA-TV's work includes *Target City Hall* (1989) and *Like a Prayer* (1991); some of the *Living with AIDS* episodes are available on the compilation *Video against AIDS* distributed by Video Data Bank. All of these videos are also included in the Royal S. Marks Collection of AIDS Activist Videotapes at the NYPL.

32 *L is for the Way You Look*, dir. Jean Carlomusto (Women Make Movies, 1991).

33 Carlomusto's video thus offers a corroboration and extension of Roland Barthes's argument about the "punctum" in *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), an investigation of the affective power of photography that leads him finally to a photograph of himself as a boy with his mother.

34 See Patricia White's discussion of *L Is for the Way You Look* in *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1999), 35–36.

35 See Hirsch, *Family Frames*.

36 On this issue, see Eric Clarke, *Virtuous Vice: Homoeroticism and the Public Sphere* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).

37 See Watney, *Policing Desire*; Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy"; Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*; and on *Silverlake Life*, Phelan, Mourning Sex, 153–73.

38 Jean Carlomusto, phone conversation with the author, 8 July 2002.

39 See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

40 See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991).

41 On Holocaust memorials and museums, see J. Young, *The Texture of Memory*. On the Vietnam War memorial in Washington, see Sturken, *Tangled Memories*.

42 Maxine Wolfe is a member of the collective; Polly Thistlethwaite worked with LHA for many years and also lived there; Alexis Danzig was a member and also went on a cross-country tour with the slide show; and Jean Carlomusto and Catherine (Saalfield) Gund made *Not Just Passing Through* about LHA.

43 The profound influence of the archive on Leonard's photography is visible throughout her work, including her photographs of the bearded lady preserved at a museum in France, her photos of little girls in New York's Museum of Natural History, and her recent pictures of a disappearing culture on New York's Lower East Side. For catalogs of her work, see Zoe Leonard, *Strange Fruit* (New York: Paula Cooper Gallery, 1995), and Secession.

44 AIDS: A LIVING ARCHIVE™ was also the title of the 2001 exhibit Carlomusto and Rosett curated for the Museum of the City of New York to mark the twentieth anniversary of GMHC; the exhibit included the first public installation of "The Portrait Gallery." In addition to footage Carlomusto and Rosett shot for the installation, "The Portrait Gallery" uses clips from Carlomusto and Rosett's archives, including tapes Carlomusto made with GMHC (including the Living with AIDS cable access series, the Safer Sex Shorts, and the Oral History Project), ACT-UP'S DIVA-TV, and the Testing the Limits Collective; footage Rosett shot and produced for the Sixth International

Conference on HIV/AIDS and stds in San Francisco in June 1990; interviews Rosett shot and produced with South African AIDS activists; and material shot by Gregg Bordowitz, some of which now appears in his video *Habit* (2001).

45 Jane Rosett, e-mail to author, 17 January 2002.

Epilogue

1 For more on the Shepard case, see Beth Loffreda, *Losing Matt Shepard: Life and Politics in the Aftermath of Anti-Gay Murder* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

2 Richard Kim, "The Truth about Hate Crimes Laws," *Nation*, 12 July 1999, 20.

3 *The Brandon Teena Story*, dir. Susan Muska and Greta Olafsdottir (1998); and *Boys Don't Cry*, dir. Kimberly Peirce (1999).

4 See Donna Minkowitz, "Love Hurts," *Village Voice*, 19April 1994, 24–30; and John Gregory Dunne, "Murder at the Farmhouse," *New Yorker*, 13 January 1997, 45–62.

5 See Michele Aaron, "Pass/fail," *Screen* 42, no. 1 (spring 2001): 92–96.

6 Judith Halberstam has taken up the case of Teena in "Male Fraud: Counterfeit Masculinities and the Brandon Teena Archive" (paper presented at the Future of the Queer Past conference, University of Chicago, September 2000), as well as "Telling Tales: Brandon Teena, Billy Tipton, and Transgender Biography," in *Passing: Identity and Interpretation in Sexuality, Race, and Religion*, ed. María C. Sánchez and Linda Schlossberg (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 13–37. It is significant that Halberstam uses the concept of the "archive" to describe the range of documents that represent the Teena case. Halberstam has also contributed to a dossier of short articles about *Boys Don't Cry* that have appeared in Screen: Aaron, "Pass/fail"; Julianne Pidduck, "Risk and Queer Spectatorship," Screen 42, no. 2 (spring 2001): 97–102; Patricia White, "Girls Still Cry," *Screen* 42, no. 2 (summer 2001): 217–21; Judith Halberstam, "The Transgender Gaze in *Boys Don't Cry*," Screen 42, no. 3 (autumn 2001): 294–98; and Lisa Henderson, "The Class Character of *Boys Don't Cry*," Screen 42, no. 3 (autumn 2001): 299– 303. Collectively, this dossier explores the film in far more detail than I am able to do here in this brief discussion.

7 See Morrison, "The Site of Memory."

8 See Halberstam, "The Transgender Gaze"; and P. White, "Girls Still Cry."

9 Halberstam discusses this issue in "The Transgender Gaze" and "Telling Tales."

10 For more on the question of class, see Henderson, "The Class Character of *Boys Don't Cry*. "

11 I'm borrowing here the distinction between universalizing and minoritizing conceptions of sexual identity as formulated by Sedgwick in Epistemology of the Closet.

12 See Leys, *Trauma*, 2. This extremely useful and thoughtful book appeared as I was finishing this one, and I thus can offer only a partial response to it here.

13 For a series of arguments about why Clinton's sexual life might be of serious national interest, see Lauren Berlant and Lisa Duggan, eds., *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the Public Interest* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

14 For a discussion of the links between the Holocaust and his work in Bosnia, see also Stevan M. Weine, *When History Is a Nightmare: Lives and Memories of Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia-Herzogovina* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999). (To be noted, though, is the Eurocentric focus of these historical connections, which leave genocides in other sites such as Africa unaddressed.)

15 My understanding of the Theater Arts against Political Violence has benefited from public presentations by Saul and Reisner at the Refugee Conference in New York (March 2000), the International Trauma Studies Program (May 2000), and the International Society for Truamatic Stress Studies conference in San Antonio (November 2000). For information on the International Trauma Studies Program, see the Web site at www.nyu.edu/trauma.studies/.

16 For a strong critique of van der Kolk, see Leys, *Trauma*, esp. 229–65. Leys reads van der Kolk

alongside Cathy Caruth, who has brought his work to the attention of those in cultural studies by including it in her anthology *Trauma*.

17 See van der Kolk, "The Body Keeps the Score." At the 2000 International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies conference, van der Kolk participated in a panel on "Repetition, Memory, and Working through in the Trauma Theories" that focused on body therapy and included a presentation by Pat Ogden, a therapist who specializes in Hakomi touch therapy and is associated with the Naropa Institute.

18 Elizabeth Jane Costello, "Which Model of Care for Children under Extreme Stress?" (paper presented at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies conference, San Antonio, Texas, 17 November 2000). The quotations are taken from the abstract for the paper printed in the conference program (19).

19 My presentation, "Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures," was from chapter 1 of this book. The conference was at Rice University, Houston, Texas, 3–5 November 2000.

Filmography

In order to facilitate access to films and videos that are less readily available, those distributed by Women Make Movies and Video Data Bank are noted as such. Women Make Movies can be contacted at 462 Broadway, Suite 500, New York, New York 10013, (212) 925-0606. Video Data Bank can be contacted at 112 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603, (312) 345-3550; Video Data Bank's compilation tape Video against AIDS includes many important AIDS activist videos. Another vital resource for AIDS activist videos is the Royal S. Marks Collection of AIDS Activist Videotapes at the New York Public Library.

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Bhangra Jig. Pratibha Parmar. Women Make Movies, 1990.

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Boys Don't Cry. Kimberly Peirce. 1999.

The Brandon Teena Story. Susan Muska and Greta Olafsdottir. 1998.

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Earth. Mehta Deepa. 1999.

Fast Trip, Long Drop. Gregg Bordowitz. 1993.

Fire. Mehta Deepa. 1996.

Flesh and Paper. Pratibha Parmar. 1990.

Forbidden Love. Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman. Women Make Movies, 1992.

Girlpower. Sadie Benning. Women Make Movies, 1992.

Greetings from out Here. Ellen Spiro. Video Data Bank, 1993.

Hallelujah! The Ron Athey Story. Catherine (Saalfield) Gund. Aubin Pictures, 1998.

The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love. Maria Maggenti. 1995.

Internal Combustion. Alisa Lebow and Cynthia Madansky. Video Data Bank, 1995.

(In)Visible Women. Marina Alvarez and Ellen Spiro. Women Make Movies, 1991.

Khush. Pratibha Parmar. Women Make Movies, 1991.

L Is for the Way You Look. Jean Carlomusto. Women Make Movies, 1991.

Life Is Beautiful. Roberto Benigni. 1997.

Like a Prayer. DIVA-TV. 1991.

Not Just Passing Through. Jean Carlomusto, Dolores Perez, Catherine Saalfield, and Polly Thistlethwaite. Women Make Movies, 1994.

Outlaw. Alisa Lebow. Women Make Movies, 1994.

A Place of Rage. Pratibha Parmar. Women Make Movies, 1991.

Positive: Life with HIV. Catherine (Saalfield) Gund. 1995.

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To Catch a Glimpse. Jean Carlomusto. 1997.

Tongues Untied. Marlon Riggs. 1989.

Treyf. Alisa Lebow and Cynthia Madansky. Women Make Movies, 1998.

Two or Three Things but Nothing for Sure. Tina DiFeliciantonio and Jane C. Wagner. Women Make Movies, 1997.

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